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Gladstone, William Ewart

Third Midlothian campaign

Edinburgh

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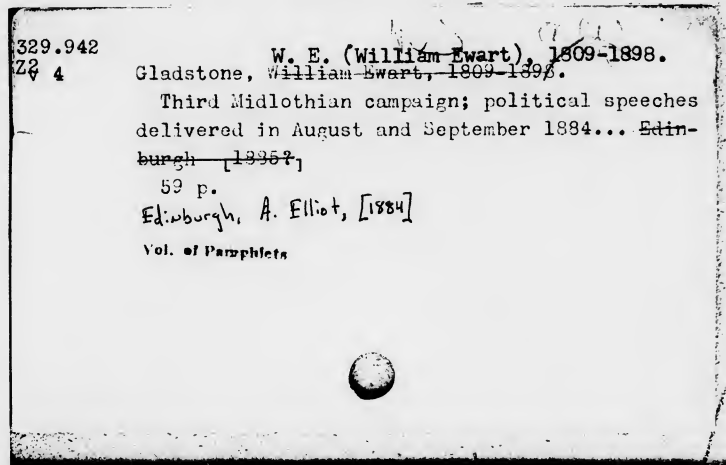
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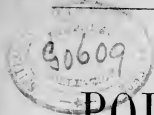
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No 7
THIRD MIDLOTHIAN CAMPAIGN.



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POLITICAL SPEECHES

DELIVERED IN

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1884

BY THE

RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

AUTHORIZED EDITION.

ANDREW ELLIOT,
17 PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH.

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FIRST SPEECH
IN
THE CORN EXCHANGE, EDINBURGH,

30th AUGUST 1884.

Mr. BRAND, advocate, moved that Mr. JOHN COWAN of Beeslack take the chair.

Mr. COWAN said :—Brother Electors, my Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—We are met to accord a hearty welcome to the Right Hon. Mr. Gladstone, member for Midlothian. We were so bold, five years ago, as to solicit the greatest ornament of the House of Commons—the greatest statesman of the day—to be our candidate for the representation of the county; and we may perhaps look back upon that period with some surprise that we aspired so high. But I maintain that in Scotland our attachment to Liberal principles, and our attachment—our unwavering attachment—to the Liberal party, was a sufficient justification in aspiring to have Mr. Gladstone as our member. You all know the excellent qualities, the talents, the powers that characterize Mr. Gladstone. I think with the high principle which actuates our member whereby he is willing to sacrifice himself in the cause of duty, and even to suffer the loss of reputation, if that were necessary, for the accomplishment of that end,—I think we have in him a wonderful exhibition of all that is true, and able, and perfect; and I do not wonder that in the Scottish nation Mr. Gladstone lives in the hearts and affections of the people. Without further preface I invite our member to address this assemblage.

Mr. GLADSTONE said :—Mr. Chairman, my Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—Nearly five years, as the chairman has reminded you, have elapsed since you were pleased to invite me to enter into political relations with the county of Midlothian, and four and a half years have passed since I have had the honour of addressing you in relation to the duties you were pleased to confide to my hands. You are aware that the length of that interval has not been due to any want of will on my part to meet you, but that a temporary failure of strength, from which I soon and happily recovered, alone prevented the fulfilment of an engagement to which I had looked forward with eagerness, and in that sense with anxiety. I will not now say more of that spirit-stirring period, than that I hope you

have not repented of what you said and what you did at that time; and if that be the case with regard to your acts and words, I can assure you that I have not repented of mine. Now that I have come amongst you I am somewhat abashed at the amount of duty which I ought to perform, and which, I am well aware, I can only accomplish in a most inadequate manner, and that through your unbounded indulgence. I ought undoubtedly to enter into what I may call the rendering of my account; and if in vague words, and always avoiding verifying particulars, our opponents have stated that the declarations of the Midlothian campaign have been forgotten, I would easily undertake to show—and perhaps before this visit concludes, I may be able to say something for the purpose of showing—that they are still fresh in my recollection, and that I recede from none of them. I ought also, if time permitted,—and I will, as far as time may permit, though perhaps not to-day,—make some remarks upon the present general condition of public affairs. Thirdly, I ought to say something upon that which is local and Scottish, and, as this must be brief and will not interfere seriously with the main purpose I have for the moment in view, I will say a few words which are naturally uppermost in my mind of gratitude to the people of this county for the unbounded confidence they have been pleased to repose in me, and for the constant assurance of that confidence which has done so much to support me during an arduous period of public affairs. I rejoice to know that such as you were in 1879 and 1880, when you did your part, and perhaps something more than your part, in leading the mind of the country to the great consummation then attained—such as you were then, such you are now. And there was one feature in that struggle—a feature which still continues to subsist, and which gave it an interest—a finishing interest, if not a higher interest, than any other. It was that that election was, above all things, a spontaneous election. It was not brought about by any overshadowing or domineering influence. It was not worked by machinery constructed from without. It was, and it has been down to this day, as regards the maintenance of your political condition, your own work—your own work in your county, your own work in your parishes—the work of those conveners, who manfully and intelligently, in every parish, arrayed the Liberal forces, and gave these trustworthy accounts, far superior to the reports of purchased canvassers, which were so splendidly verified upon the day of election. If that was the case in your parishes, the same was the case at headquarters in Edinburgh, and I rejoice to take this opportunity of rendering my thanks—I might almost make myself your organ and render likewise your acknowledgments—to those central organisers in this town, who brought to a head the work that was done in every parish of the county, and who have spared no pains, no sacrifices of time and labour, for the purpose of giving full

effect to what they believed to be your conscientious and intelligent convictions.

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS.

Well, gentlemen, one word upon Scottish affairs. I regret to think that Scottish affairs have suffered, along with English, Irish, and Imperial affairs, from the recent unadvised and unhappy action of one branch of the Legislature. But for that unhappy action I have no doubt there would have been consummated at this time a work the origin of which is due to my distinguished host, who occupies a position among you that it would be impertinence in me to describe. I will only say of him that he is a man whose patriotism, whose Scottish patriotism, is equal—and it could not be more than equal—to his ability and to his eloquence. Thanks to the exertions of Lord Rosebery, in leading those who desired to make known your wishes to the Government, the Bill for improving the Local Government of Scotland had reached a point at which its success was a moral certainty, and at which the delay which has unhappily intervened can only be ascribed—along, I am sorry to say, with much other political loss and mischief—to the unfortunate proceedings on which I shall have further occasion to comment.

THE CROFTER QUESTION.

There is another question on which I will not say more than one word, but it is a Scottish question which I do not wish wholly to pass over in silence on the first occasion of my speaking in Scotland, although those who are immediately interested in it are, probably, none of them to be found within this great hall. I speak of the case of the crofters of the north, but I speak of it only to this extent—for we have other work to do—that I assure you it is the deep conviction of the Government that, when they can find the time and the opportunity, it will be their duty to give their most serious and sympathetic attention to the question, which has been brought before them in a manner so lucid by the labours of the Commission over which Lord Napier presided, so much to his honour and with such great ability.

THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE.

But, gentlemen, the purpose for which I have come here is apart for the moment from those matters. I will not say it is disconnected

with them, for, after all, the extension and invigoration of our electoral system is the true way of making effectual provision for the progress of every Liberal and every patriotic interest in the years of the future. And besides all these subjects there is another upon which I must endeavour to find the opportunity of saying some few words; for although the country has, with marvellous intelligence, applied itself to comprehend the state of things within the walls of the House of Commons, yet I am sure it must continue to be my duty, and the duty of others who are personally cognisant of the state of affairs in that House, to draw your attention again and again to the defective inward organisation of that House of Parliament, which blocks our business, which stops the expression of opinion, which arrests the progress of legislation, and which has risen to be of such importance as a political question that there is hardly any other subject which can be compared with it in the injurious effects that the present state of things produces upon our country. But, for to-day, let me endeavour to set as fully, as clearly at any rate, before you as I can what I think to be the immediate issue.

THE FRANCHISE BILL.

What is the purpose with which I have come among you—I mean the special purpose, apart from my general duty to render an account to you of the course I have pursued as your representative? It is to promote, by every legitimate means in my power, the speedy passing of the Franchise Bill. Considering the interests that are arrayed against it, considering the indirect form in which opposition to it is pursued, considering the magnitude of the subject in itself, I feel that it is in itself enough for the declarations I have to make to you. Undoubtedly, the unfortunate rejection of that Bill—gentlemen, I call it rejection—if the word were cavilled at I should say, ‘Very well, we will only call it the “effectual stoppage” of the Bill,’ but there is no doubt that that is a moderate, literal, and warrantable description of what has taken place—but the ‘rejection’ of that Bill, which, after all, is the simplest and best phrase to use, has already drawn in its train other questions of the gravest kind, and has suggested to the minds of a vast portion of the people the inquiry, whether the time has come when it will be necessary to study the means of introducing an organic change into the constitution of the House of Lords. Now, gentlemen, into that question it is not my intention on this occasion to enter. The controversy now before us with regard to the Franchise Bill is sufficiently weighty, and the field sufficiently wide. Should the passing of that measure be delayed, I have no doubt that the field of that controversy will become wider still. But my duty as a Minister of the Crown—speaking for myself, and I believe expressing with tolerable fidelity the opinions of my colleagues—my duty as a

Minister of the Crown is not to look into the far future while the work of the day demands every energy, and more than every energy, that we possess. What we want is a national expression of opinion in the constitutional modes familiar to this country upon this great question—whether two millions of your fellow-subjects are to be admitted to a share in political and Parliamentary power. That is enough for me to put before you. Others are more free to enter into what may or may not happen in the ulterior stages of this great conflict. But for my part I seek to avoid them. It may be the timidity of age—it may be the indolence from which none of us are altogether free,—but I own to you, gentlemen, that I look with reluctance to entering upon questions of organic change in the constitution of this country, unless and until the moment comes when I can no longer deny their necessity. I believe that the House of Lords has not yet placed itself in a position of irretrievable error, I believe it is possible it may go back, and may go back with dignity and with honour. If it does so, I for my part shall rejoice in our having been enabled to attain an enormous national advantage without the prolonged and almost inextricable conflict which would necessarily beset and encumber the whole question of the franchise, if that great controversy came to be mixed up as to its practical issues with another controversy perhaps greater still, or at any rate more difficult. As a Minister of the Crown my duty is to look to the question of the day. The question of the day, such as it is now before me, is, God knows, enough for me, and it is that upon which I wish to bring home to you the propositions I would lay before you.

THE FACTS ABOUT THE BILL.

Let us see, first of all, what is the state of facts before us? The state of facts before us is this. A majority, which I may call a majority of 130, in the Representative House passed the Franchise Bill; and, on the third reading of the Bill, evidently apprehensive lest the majority of 130 should be seriously increased, the opponents of the Bill disappeared from the House of Commons with the exception of two gentlemen, who, by an effort of superhuman courage when the question of the third reading was put from the chair, gave utterance to the word ‘No,’ but, unfortunately, gave utterance to it in such a manner that it was totally inaudible to the Speaker, and the consequence was that the Franchise Bill stands recorded—for he who does not speak audibly does not speak at all—stands recorded in our journals as having been passed *namine contradicente*—with a unanimous verdict of the House. Well, gentlemen, this being so, the Franchise Bill went to the House of Lords; and there a majority, which may be called either 59 or 50 as you think fit (for there were two divisions nearly equivalent to

one another), did put what I call mildly an effectual stoppage on the Bill, or, in other words, did practically reject the Bill.

CONTENTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

That is the state of the facts. We have got into a great crisis. I will try to show you by and by with what perseverance the Government have endeavoured to avoid that crisis; but we have got into a great crisis, and the question now is—Who is right and who is wrong? What are our contentions, and what are the contentions of our opponents? Our contentions are these. In the first place, we say that this Bill ought to be passed, because the extension of the franchise with redistribution or without redistribution is a good in itself. We have no doubt that with redistribution it will be made a much greater good; but we hold that it is a good in itself. In the second place, we hold—perhaps I might say generally, but it is not necessary to generalize—that at any rate in such a case as this, it is plain that, in a representative country, when issue has been deliberately joined, the representative chamber ought to prevail, and must prevail. In the third place, we contend, and I think I will prove it to you with an almost mathematical rigour—we contend that the condition which our opponents attach to the passing of the Bill, namely, that with it shall be joined a Bill for redistribution of seats, is a condition which would place the whole subject at the absolute mercy of the minority in the House of Commons. I go a little further, and I do not hesitate to say that those who are opposing us, and making use of this topic of redistribution as a means for defeating the Franchise Bill, know as well as we do that, had we been such idiots and such dolts as to present to Parliament a Bill for the combined purposes, or (to do what is exactly the same thing) to bring in two Bills for the two purposes, and to work them together as one measure—they know as well as we do that a disgraceful failure would have been the result of our folly, and that we should, with the knowledge we possessed, have been traitors to you, and traitors to the cause we had in hand. That is our contention, and what is their contention?

CONTENTIONS OF THE OPPOSITION.

Well, their contention is, in the first place, that we ought to combine these two Bills. That I will presently consider. In the second place, some distinguished members of the House of Lords have been, as I think, rash enough to set up the doctrine that the House of Lords is a representative assembly. In the third place, they say they are not willing to yield to the House of Commons, but they are

perfectly willing to yield to the people; and, in the fourth place, they say they are eminently justified in making these reserves, because the subject before them is, as Lord Salisbury has phrased it, a revision of the Constitution. Now, I will consider the matter upon the contentions of our opponents, and I will begin with the last contention first.

FRANCHISE BILL NO REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION.

Is it true that this measure we have introduced is a revision of the Constitution? It is no revision of the Constitution. It improves, enlarges, strengthens the constituency of the House of Commons. It alters none of the powers of that House. It alters none of the powers of the House of Lords. But does it, in dealing with the constituency, introduce novel principles? No, gentlemen; nothing of the kind; and I now beg you to observe, as I briefly recite to you the points, with what care and with what patience—I might say, perhaps, with what self-denial—we have endeavoured to take out of the mouths of our opponents every pretext for bringing about a political crisis, and to make it plain to the meanest understanding that they ought, for their own interests, as well as for the interests of the country, to pass the Bill that is before them. A revision of the Constitution is a measure that alters the relations, and alters the powers and rights of the different orders of the State, and of the bodies through which the self-governing energy of the nation takes effect in law and in acts of government. We have changed nothing of the kind. We have introduced no new principle into the constituency. We have done nothing but extend to the counties the very principle which the Tories themselves first announced for the towns. There was some risk perhaps—at any rate, there was some uncertainty—when the borough franchise was extended. There was the possibility that great changes of tone and temper might be introduced when the large masses of people inhabiting the towns, connected with the labouring class, and inhabiting houses even of the lowest order, were added to the voting power—there might have been some pretext for fear; but the House of Lords, without apprehension, passed that Bill, for they received it from the hands of a Tory Government.

And now, what have we done as regards the aims of our measure?—I speak of England and Scotland—because with respect to Ireland our opponents do not venture to contest the justice of it, and really have receded from the field. I speak of England and Scotland, and I say this, that the bulk and main aim of our measure is simply to apply in the counties the very principle that they themselves proclaimed for the towns. Now is it within the compass of human hardihood to say that the same class which has in the towns exercised the suffrage with unquestionable benefit to the country is less com-

petent to exercise it because the people dwell in the counties? It is absurd. There is no doubt that this measure is a large measure, because it covers a wide field and affects vast multitudes of our fellow citizens. On principle, I won't say it is a small measure, but I say this, that, as to its main enactment, it has not in the slightest degree the character of innovation, and it is ridiculous to justify the action of the Lords on the plea that this is a revision of the Constitution, when, in point of fact, the purpose of the Bill is simply to apply to one portion of the population equally competent—undoubtedly in no respect inferior—that which has already been enjoyed, not only with satisfaction to themselves but with advantage to the State, by another portion of the population corresponding in status, and to a very great extent in pursuit, but living in the towns, whereas those now to be enfranchised live in the country. Therefore, gentlemen, in its first aspect, and with regard to what I admit—aye, and claim—to be a vast enfranchisement, never was so large a Bill submitted to Parliament which was, if I may so say, so innocent in point of principle, for it raised no new questions; and if one set of politicians were more bound than another to have welcomed that Bill and passed it, it was the Tory party, who claim it as their greatest honour that they first proposed a Bill for household suffrage in the towns.

CONCILIATORY ACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

(1) Service Franchise.

But, gentlemen, now see what we have done. I admit that we made an addition to the household franchise. We introduced into the Bill what is called the service franchise. Now, was it possible for us to take a measure more evidently bearing on its front the character of conciliation to the Tory party? It is under that service franchise that gardeners, gamekeepers, and sub-agents, and the immediate dependents of the gentry throughout the country will be admitted to the franchise. They were not householders in the eye of the law. Speaking generally, they hold their houses in connection with their offices. We might have made that an excuse. We might have said—These people are not independent enough, and we won't give them the franchise; but, wishing as we did to disarm the enemy, wishing as we did to compel the Opposition to agree with us for once, wishing as we did to lift this great question of the franchise out of the sphere of party dissension altogether, and to hold it high as a great national blessing to be conferred on the nation by the united action of Parliament, we did not scruple to make special provisions for the purpose of enfranchising even the very men with regard to whom we were most certain that they were likely to

be influenced in elections by the wishes of the gentry; and which way the wishes of the gentry lean, it needs not me to say.

(2) Ancient Rights Franchise.

Just in the same way, gentlemen, we considered what is called in England the Ancient Rights Franchise. There are, as you know, in a number of towns bodies of freemen. I will not say anything about these bodies, except that unquestionably their existence as a privileged class has been, upon the whole, and from the nature of the case, favourable to Toryism. Nevertheless, still acting on the principle of conciliation, we left them completely alone.

(3) Property Franchise.

Well, gentlemen, you know there are,—and you have had almost better reason than anybody else to know it,—you know that there are property franchises apart from the household franchises. Undoubtedly we took the opportunity while we were dealing with the subject, to put a stop, as far as we could, to one of the grossest and most monstrous abuses ever practised in a free country by the manufacture of faggot votes. You also know that what is called the Advanced Liberal party,—the Radical party properly so called,—view with very great jealousy those property franchises. They held the 'one man one vote' principle. I don't know that there are not colleagues of mine—several colleagues of mine—who lean a good deal to that principle. (Laughter.) Yes, and some whom perhaps you would not suspect. Notwithstanding that, so determined were we to cast aside everything like party predilection on our own part in framing the provisions of our Bill, that we retained in the lump the whole of those property franchises; and thereby, I should have thought, upon the principles almost of decency that regulates intercourse between man and man, we established some claim to the goodwill of our opponents and to their cheerful acquiescence in the measure. I must, in passing, do an act of justice to the Radicals. I assure you, that when I proposed that Bill in the House of Commons, and when, point after point, I gave the House to understand how, in everything, we had gone to the extreme of consideration for our opponents, and how we had avoided—except, perhaps, in the single instance of the stopping of faggot votes—everything that might be supposed to have special attractions for our friends—I was amazed at, but I was grateful for, the generous manner in which the advanced portion of the Liberal party received the Bill. They did not look at the specialities of their own opinions. They looked at the great measure of enfranchisement; they hailed it with enthusiasm, and they have adhered to it with fidelity; and every class and section of the party has worked as one man in carrying forward a great cause to a great consummation.

(4) Registration.

I do not think I have even done yet. Other changes ought to be introduced into our law. The length of time required as a condition—the twelve months required as a condition before registration—is certainly too long. There is no doubt about it. We were very much disposed to shorten that period; but, again wishing to secure the great object—wishing to disarm opposition by every honest means—we passed over that subject lest we should excite timid minds, and furnish an excuse to our opponents.

(5) Operation of Bill.

Then, gentlemen, they were extremely anxious that the Bill should not be allowed to take effect on the day of its passing; and, in order to secure that—in order to make it certain that time would be allowed to consider the question of redistribution before a general election arrived—they desired that a date should be inserted in the Bill. Again, we met them as well as we could—I mean those of them who asked for a date. I don't say they all asked for it, for they asked for a good deal more, some of them. Further, instead of allowing—which the Bill as it was introduced would have brought about—instead of allowing the Bill to take effect the moment of passing, we agreed that it should take no practical effect until the year 1886, so that the year 1885 might be devoted to the subject of redistribution.

(6) Principles of Redistribution.

Well, gentlemen, as they were very much alarmed about redistribution, I undertook, with the sanction of my colleagues, to sketch out to them the general principles upon which our redistribution would be based. I told them that it must be an extensive redistribution; I stated the general rules, and those general rules have been restated, or adhesion to them has been expressed, by my colleagues from time to time in debate; and they have not denied that they are framed in a considerate spirit, that they do not go to extremes, that they aim at the avoidance of any unnecessary change, and, in fact, as was said by Mr. Goschen, a most honourable opponent of the Bill, that they were framed in a conservative spirit.

FURTHER CONCESSIONS.

Now gentlemen, I ask, after that, is it not true, and have we not a right to say, that we have done much to invite those who are now offering to us a perverse opposition, to lay aside their prejudices, to get over the aversion which I admit the Tory, because he is a Tory, whatever he may say, is inclined to

feel for extension of the franchise, and to join us in accepting what they themselves know to be inevitable—in accepting it with a good grace, in accepting it by a combination of parties, and putting themselves in a condition to go to the country and say, 'Let no man say we are opponents to reform—we have joined with the Government in making this great extension of the Parliamentary franchise'? Well, gentlemen, we pledged ourselves over head and ears that if they would pass this Franchise Bill we would undertake, so far as depended upon us, to devote next year to the consideration of the redistribution of seats. And then, because even that was thought not to be enough, it appeared to us that we might go a step further, and that we might say—We will ask the two Houses to join together in solemn resolutions binding the Government to proceed with redistribution next year, and stating that they had accepted the franchise in reliance upon the pledge of the Government to allow them to deal with redistribution.

LORD COWPER'S PROPOSAL.

This is a catalogue of concessions, wearisome from its length, but we believed it to be wise. We had some hope that it might avert the constitutional conflict in which we now find ourselves involved; and we had a perfect certainty that if, unhappily, we came to be engaged in a conflict, at least there could be no doubt who were the parties responsible for bringing about the mischiefs with which it must be attended. A nobleman, well known as a faithful adherent of Liberal principles, has not been able to restrain the gush of his political philanthropy,—I mean Lord Cowper,—and he has proposed that we should yet go a step further, and that we should consent to lay a Redistribution Bill upon the table of the House of Commons, provided it is understood that upon becoming acquainted with our views in that formal manner, the House of Lords will proceed to pass the Franchise Bill—that upon our introduction of a Redistribution Bill the Franchise Bill would be passed. But, unfortunately, Lord Cowper has not been able to inform us that the Tories are ready to enter into that bargain. I do not know whether the Liberals would be ready to enter into it; but, at any rate, you will excuse me for saying that, in the view of most moderate men, it would be at least premature on my part to consider it, until I was made aware that some large section, at any rate, of the Tory party—a considerable share of the majority which has destroyed our Bill in the House of Lords—was ready to accept that method, as a sort of satisfaction to its honour, of escaping from the dilemma in which, I am persuaded, many reasonable peers of the majority find and feel themselves to be placed. Gentlemen, I think I need not detain you further upon that subject. It is clear enough that we have in some

respects, I think, tried the patience of our friends, but that we have made every concession for the purpose of disarming the opposition of our adversaries, except the concession of joining the two Bills in one.

THE HEREDITARY PRINCIPLE.

I have said that I shall avoid all discussion on the future constitution of the House of Lords. I will go one step further, and I hope you won't consider it a sign of weakness. I know that Scotch politics, as they are distinguished by great firmness, are also distinguished by great forbearance and great tolerance; and I hope you will extend to me that forbearance when I tell you that I am not at all averse to the intermixture of the hereditary principle in the constitution of the House of Lords. In a mixed society, in a mixed Government, it has many merits as qualifying the action of many other principles which would be more unchecked without it. But in my opinion, the worst enemy of the hereditary principle is the man who places it in direct conflict, brow to brow, with the elective and representative principle. If the hereditary chamber deliberately involves itself in that conflict and perseveres in it, it is treading the pathway which leads to an issue that I will not describe, but it is not that of safety or of honour.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS BEFORE 1832.

Now, it is said that the House of Lords is a representative assembly; and that compels me to look a little to what the House of Lords has been in the past. A great change has taken place in the position and action of the House of Lords since the Reform Bill. Before the Reform Bill, the House of Lords really hardly ever could be said to come into direct conflict with the House of Commons unless we go back a very long way—I should say to the beginning of the last century. The reason of that was that, before the Reform Bill, the enormous influence exercised by the peerage upon elections, especially upon the elections for the close boroughs, enabled them to dispense with pushing to an advanced point the separate and avowed action of the House of Lords.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS SINCE 1832.

Since the Reform Act the action of the House of Lords, the influence of the House of Lords, has been greatly reduced and entirely changed. Although the Peers have still great influence in the constituency, yet it has come to depend upon the voluntary

submission of those members of the constituency who place themselves under its action. Well, how have we gone on since the Reform Act, and how far is it true that the House of Lords is a representative assembly? What is often said, and said by clever men, in the House of Lords is this—that its purpose is to represent not the fleeting opinions of the people, not the passion of the moment, but the permanent, solid convictions of the people.

ITS SYMPATHIES WITH PARLIAMENT.

With regard to the fleeting opinions of the people, the most remarkable case that I know of fleeting opinion was the passing of the Ecclesiastical Titles Act in 1851, when there was a very strong national feeling in England and in Scotland in favour of a measure which was afterwards found totally unworkable, and was repealed with unanimous consent. But did the House of Lords resist that fleeting opinion? On the contrary, a very stiff opposition was offered to the Bill in the House of Commons, which is such a mirror of fleeting opinion and transitory feeling; but the House of Lords accepted that measure with open arms. But how is it with regard to the solid and permanent opinion of the nation? Why, gentlemen, it stands thus—We have had twelve Parliaments since the Reform Act—I have a right to say so, as I have sat in every one of them—and the opinion—the national opinion—has been exhibited in the following manner. Ten of those Parliaments have had a Liberal majority. The eleventh Parliament was the one that sat from 1841 to 1847. It was elected as a Tory Parliament, but in 1846 it put out the Conservative Government of Sir Robert Peel, and put in and supported till its dissolution the Liberal Government of Lord John Russell. That is the eleventh Parliament. But then there is the twelfth Parliament, and that is the one that you and I, gentlemen, know a good deal about, for we talked largely on the subject of its merits or demerits, whichever they may be, at the time of the last election. That Parliament was, I admit, a Tory Parliament from the beginning to the end. But I want to know, looking back for a period of more than fifty years, which represented the solid permanent conviction of the nation?—the ten Parliaments that were elected upon ten out of the twelve dissolutions, or the one Parliament that chanced to be elected from the disorganised state of the Liberal party in the early part of the year 1874? Well, here are ten Parliaments on the one side, here is one Parliament on the other side. With which of these parties is it—the right hand or the left—that the House of Lords was in sympathy? The House of Lords was in sympathy with the one Parliament, and was in opposition as regards the majority of that assembly—on which I have a word to say—to the ten Parliaments. And yet you are told, when—we will say

for forty-five years out of fifty—practically the nation has manifested its Liberal tendencies by the election of Liberal Parliaments, and once only has chanced to elect a thoroughly Tory Parliament,—you are told that it is the thoroughly Tory Parliament that represents the solid and permanent opinion of the country.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN MAJORITY AND MINORITY.

Now, gentlemen, I have been speaking of the House of Lords, but I must draw a distinction. When I speak of the House of Lords, I so speak for brevity, and because the voices of the majority govern and carry with them the authoritative action of the House; but I thankfully remember that the majority of the House of Lords is not the whole House of Lords,—that in the House of Lords you have what is certainly a minority, but what is no inconsiderable minority either in numbers or in talents, or in representing the ancient aristocracy of the country, or in sympathy with the people of the country. And, gentlemen, if I am right in drawing that distinction and in begging you to remember what a mass of sound popular opinion and popular sympathy exists in the House of Lords—if it is right generally, above all it is right in Scotland, because in Scotland you are happy in the possession of a large number of peers who, upon every ground that can entitle men to honour, and especially upon that ground I have last spoken of—namely, their sympathy with the national heart and feeling—are an honour to that House, and, perhaps, would not be altogether easy to match in any part of England.

REVIEW OF THE ACTION OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

I go on to speak of the corporate action of the House of Lords, and I want to show you, by a few instances, how unfortunately it has worked. The conclusion I shall found upon this is a very moderate conclusion, and I go no further than this—that the House of Lords ought to be content with the power it possesses; ought to be content with the impunity with which that power has been exercised, and not to challenge the nation upon a question like the extension of the franchise, and ought not to push its opinions to extremes. But I cannot say, gentlemen—so far as, with every wish to be impartial, I am able to form a judgment—I cannot say that the legislative action of the majority of the House of Lords has for the last fifty years been a benefit or a blessing to the country.

IRISH MUNICIPAL REFORM.

Now, I will give you a few instances. There was the question of municipal reform in Ireland. You know the value we all set upon

municipal institutions,—the means of carrying on local self-government, and to a great extent the seed plot in which and upon which habits of political thought and political capacity are formed throughout the country. Well, nothing could be more desirable than to create that kind of self-government in Ireland, because in Ireland centralisation of the Government,—now perhaps, as I hope, a good deal, in some respects, diminished, though not yet sufficiently diminished,—was one of the great blots on the country. Immediately after the first Reform Bill it was proposed to grant municipal reform to Ireland, but it was opposed by the majority of the House of Lords. It was proposed in 1835, in 1836, in 1837, in 1838, and in 1839. It was passed by the House of Commons, I think, in all those years, certainly in nearly all those years, and was rejected by the House of Lords. In the year 1840, at last, it was passed, but passed in a mutilated form—passed, for instance, with a higher franchise, differing from the franchise in England, so that the brand might still be left upon the country.

IRISH LAND QUESTION.

I will take the great question of Irish land, which has occupied, as you well know, no small portion of the time and thoughts of the Government since I last had the honour of addressing you. The question of Irish land was one on which an enlightened Conservative Government forty years ago perceived the necessity of making great changes, and it was hoped that as a Conservative Government it might, perhaps, persuade the majority of the House of Lords to listen to its voice. In the year 1845 Lord Derby, the father of the present Lord Derby, being then a member of the Government of Sir Robert Peel, introduced a most important Bill into the House of Lords for the purpose of giving compensation to Irish tenants for their improvements. And it is perfectly possible that, if, at that early date, that mild and moderate measure had been passed, we to this hour never should have heard a word of the land question in Ireland. But what happened? Although Lord Derby—Lord Stanley he was then—spoke on the part of a Conservative Government, proprietary influences and class influences in the House of Lords were too strong for him, and he was compelled—most reluctantly compelled—to withdraw his Bill. See the consequences that have flowed from that deplorable action. We are told that that influence should be a corrective influence. Was that a corrective influence? Was that an influence for the purpose of moderating the action of a popular principle? No, it was a narrow view which declined and refused all just reforms, and the refusal of which, so far from leading to moderation, has led to the necessity for the adoption of vast changes in Ireland, which, naturally,

are the causes of great complaint to the same class of persons who applauded the rejection of Lord Derby's efforts in 1845.

COMPENSATION FOR DISTURBANCE IN IRELAND.

In the same way, gentlemen, in 1880 we passed through the House of Commons a Bill granting compensation for disturbance in Ireland, which, I believe, would have effectually checked and moderated the tremendous disturbances and convulsions of that country that speedily followed. That Bill, unfortunately, was lost in the House of Lords.

JEWISH DISABILITIES BILL.

Take the case of the Jewish Disabilities Bill. For a long time the people of Scotland have been convinced—attached as they are to their own religion—they have been convinced that civil disabilities ought not to attach to religious opinions. Well, the Jewish disabilities were proposed to be removed by Bills that passed the House of Commons in 1833, 1834, 1848, 1851, 1853, and 1857. Now, think of the time spent upon this subject, and uselessly spent. In every one of those cases the Bill was sent to the House of Lords; in every one of them it was rejected; and it was not until 1858 that this Bill passed in the House of Lords.

BALLOT BILL.

I give you the case of the Ballot Bill, gentlemen. In 1871 we spent no less than twenty-five nights in considering the Ballot Bill. We had had a great deal of very hard work to do, and it was sent to the House of Lords. It reached the House of Lords on August the 6th. The House of Lords voted that it was quite impossible for them, at such a late period of the year,—of course, owing to exhaustion from previous labours of the session,—that it was quite impossible for them to deal with the Bill; and they threw out the Bill because it was too late, and we had to do the whole work over again in the session of 1872. Now, the destruction of public time is the destruction of one of the most valuable commodities that is possessed by the nation.

PAPER DUTY.

I will take one more instance in which I was myself much interested. It was the repeal of the paper duty in 1860. In 1860

the House of Commons passed a Bill for the repeal of the paper duty—that is to say, to repeal a tax upon the people. It is the business of the House of Commons, no doubt, to look after the finance of the country. The House of Lords thought the House of Commons very imprudent in repealing this tax, and consequently they took upon themselves to throw out the Bill and to retain the tax. Gentlemen, it is a very great strain upon the principles of our Constitution to say that the law for imposing a tax, which law has been repealed by the House of Commons, is to be kept alive by the authority of the chamber which is not the taxing assembly. But what happened? In 1861 the House of Commons determined that it would not again try the patience of the Lords. Their practice had been to send up separately, in the extreme generosity of their confidence—to send up separately their financial proposals. They knew perfectly well that if they combined them in one financial Bill the Lords could not reject them. The repeal of the paper duty was conjoined with the rest of the financial arrangements for the year, and the consequence was that it passed the House of Lords as a matter of course. But there were two other consequences. First, the trade in paper was enormously extended; it has given scope and stimulus to invention in a hundred forms; and some of you have very likely seen very interesting ones amongst those forms in the Forestry Exhibition, which now supplies so much that is interesting to your visitors. And there was another result which was this, that the House of Lords was virtually, by that act, excluded from all financial influence whatever, and there never, since 1861, has been a serious financial debate in the House of Lords. Such was the consequence of their unwisely challenging a conflict with the representative assembly.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS MUST YIELD.

Well now, I think that I have shown that it is unwise, and that it is unwarrantable to set up as a reason why the House of Lords may refuse the Franchise Bill—it is unwise and unwarrantable to set up the doctrine that it is an assembly representative of the people of this country. I do not found upon these facts any extreme conclusion. I go no further than this. I say my inference is, that in a case of this kind they ought not to persist. Both Houses have spoken. The House of Commons—which, after all, must necessarily be the stronger House—has also spoken by a much larger majority and the most decisive declaration. They will be asked to speak again. If the House of Commons again makes the same representation to the House of Lords, what I say, gentlemen, is this—the more you examine the history of this country, the more you consider the nature of the case, the more profoundly you will be convinced, and

the more profoundly, I believe, every judicious friend of the House of Lords will be convinced, that, under these circumstances, it ought not to prolong its resistance to the wish and the conclusion of the House of Commons.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS HAS NO RIGHT TO FIX THE TIME FOR DISSOLUTION.

There is another point upon which I will not endeavour to touch to-day, which is the allegation that the House of Lords is not willing to give way to the House of Commons, but it is willing to give way to the people. Perhaps I may be able to refer to that matter more at length upon another day. But I will venture to say this: the doctrine that it is the function of the House of Lords to point out the time of dissolution, and to determine when the country is to be referred to, is a doctrine which has no place whatever in our history or our Constitution. To tamper with that doctrine, to give it the smallest countenance, to admit one jot or tittle of it, would, in my opinion, be treason to British liberty; and I tell you fairly, I would far rather abandon my share in the Franchise Bill, and that which would go with it, my share in political life, than for one moment cease to raise the loudest protest in my power against the introduction of this, the grossest innovation which, either in a reformed Parliament or in an unreformed Parliament, was ever heard of, by a majority of the House of Lords.

PROPOSAL TO JOIN FRANCHISE AND REDISTRIBUTION.

I must—although the time is passing fast—I must still speak to you on one point, and that is the joining of a Franchise Bill with redistribution, because that is always represented to you as the moderate and easy condition upon which Lord Salisbury assures us that the House of Lords is prepared to pass the Franchise Bill. They want what they call a complete measure. A Franchise Bill and a Redistribution Bill joined into one are not a complete measure. The subject of Parliamentary representation and the regulation of the House of Commons is far too large ever to have been included in a complete measure that embraces the three kingdoms. We have never had the three kingdoms dealt with before in one measure. Suppose we had introduced a Bill for England only. Then, surely, the Scotch and Irish would have been far more justified in asking for a complete measure, and in saying to us, 'What is to happen if England is enfranchised, and Scotland and Ireland are left out in the cold?' There is the question of the introduction of a measure for Scotland and Ireland; there is the question of the boundaries of

boroughs; there is the question of the duration of Parliament, of secret voting, of payment of members, of the right of special classes to vote, of the oaths to be taken by members, of the decision of disputed elections, of the property qualification, of members vacating their seats on accepting office, of the repression of corrupt practices, of the registration of voters—all these things touch vitally the constitution of the House of Commons. But nobody has ever endeavoured to associate them in what is called a complete measure, because it is simply impossible. What is true, gentlemen, is this—that redistribution was associated with franchise in the Act of 1832, and in a previous attempt of Mr. Pitt. And why? Because at that time there were multitudes of boroughs in the country sending members to Parliament, some of them, in England, having no inhabitants, and the others—I may include all the Scottish burghs—having no constituencies, and merely to have increased the franchise in England, where there were multitudes of boroughs with scarcely any population, would have been an absolute farce, and was totally out of the question. But although it was necessary to join redistribution with the franchise, it was difficult and dangerous; and I think that in that year the great Act of 1832 took no less than thirty-five days in discussing redistribution in Committee of the House of Commons. In 1867, it is perfectly true redistribution was joined with franchise; but that was a nominal redistribution, and it was a redistribution, such as it was, which was enlarged, and was helped on to the uttermost by the Liberal Opposition. But what happened in 1866? Lord Russell then had the direction of public affairs. He knew something about Parliamentary reform; he knew very well that if he joined redistribution with franchise, it was only supplying to his opponents the means of inflicting the severest and most certain defeat upon him, and also on the measure; and the measure was defeated by that very means. He knew it was hopeless to join the two things. The opponents took up that plausible pretext, and he joined franchise and redistribution. The consequence was that the measure failed, and the Government—which I do not complain of at all—the Government went out of office. But we, having before us the recollection of 1866, were not likely again to fall into the same trap. We knew that this great anxiety for redistribution and for tacking it on to the franchise had been effectually used in 1866 by gentlemen who wanted neither franchise nor redistribution. And what, therefore, did we do? We brought in our Franchise Bill alone.

PARLIAMENTARY DIFFICULTIES.

And now I ask you to attend to two or three very simple features, which will show you how far it was within the limits of possibility for us to carry a Bill joining together franchise and redistribution.

Mine, gentlemen, you must carry this with you. In the whole of discussions as regards all complex legislation, in the present state of Parliamentary business, it is the minority which is master of the House of Commons. It is not in the power of the Government to carry a very complex Bill with a determined minority, who have fixed it in their own minds that the Bill shall not be carried. You will ask me, how is that? I will show you. You admit that time is limited; you admit human strength is limited; you know that the House of Commons is the hardest-working legislative assembly in the world. But how many days do you suppose are at the real disposal of the Government for the purpose of putting forward its measures? Nominally there are ninety days in the session; but about twenty-four are Fridays, and on Fridays it is well understood that the evening is to be at the disposal of independent members. There are, therefore, about sixty-five days which are at the disposal of the Government. But the main business of the Government, and its indispensable business in every year, whatever happens, is the business of Supply. How long do you suppose Supply took? How many nights out of the sixty-five nights did Supply take in the last session? Thirty-four. How many nights did that leave to the Government for all legislative purposes—and I must tell you that we were continually vituperated for being too grasping and taking too many nights to ourselves; how many nights did that leave us? Thirty-four from sixty-five and thirty-one remains. Well, gentlemen, out of those thirty-one how many did the present minority, the present Opposition, contrive to expend upon the Franchise Bill? I have shown you that we made it simple to the last degree. We excluded a multitude of things, partly for the sake of conciliation, and I would also say partly for the sake of making it more practicable to pass the Bill by raising only a small number of points. That Franchise Bill occupied twenty-five nights out of the thirty-one, so there were just six nights left for foreign policy, for colonial policy, for the unfortunate Indian Budget, which never gets brought in until the very end of the year; and yet that very Opposition, which occupied twenty-five nights in debating the simple question of the franchise, has the hardihood to tell us that if we were anxious really to promote reform, we ought to have brought in a Redistribution Bill which would have at least quadrupled the real work to be done in considering a measure of reform, and would have enabled our opponents, if they had thought fit, to quadruple the time taken in debating it,—that is to say, to make the passing of the Bill absolutely impossible. I think, under these circumstances, it is not too much for me to say that to have combined these Bills would have been exactly equivalent to the action of a man who goes to fight his adversary with his hands and his feet tied together and lets his adversary do what he pleases. Most certainly we were not capable of such infidelity to your interests and our own pledges as to become involved in a course so preposterous; and I think I am justified in

saying it was totally impracticable for us to secure the passing of any Bill in which franchise and redistribution were joined—the question of franchise being essentially in comparison a simple one, whereas the question of redistribution involves a multitude of difficult details and particulars, which, as I told you, required in the stage of committee alone, in 1832, some thirty-five nights to dispose of.

MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION ON REDISTRIBUTION.

Shall I go one step further? I am very nearly at the close of this lengthy harangue. I have said it is, in a Parliamentary sense, impossible for us to pass through Parliament a combined Franchise and Redistribution Bill, or to make one discussion of the two subjects. Now, I go further; I say not only do we know that, but the Opposition know it too. And that is not a mere imputation of mine. I will show you that I have some right to say that they know it, because some of them have been so imprudent as to confess it. You have heard of Mr. Raikes. Mr. Raikes is a gentleman of considerable standing and position in the Opposition party. He made a speech upon another portion of the subject on the 17th June, where it happened to be for the purpose of the argument he had in hand to show that, even apart from the franchise, so large and complex were the necessary parts of the subject of reform, that we could not get through them though we devoted the whole of the next year to them. He used these words: 'He regarded it as extremely improbable that this Bill (that was the Franchise Bill) would receive the Royal assent before the 31st July this year, and what probability,' he said, 'was there of a Redistribution Bill, even if it should pass next year, receiving the Royal assent by 31st July?' That is to say, these gentlemen who have been telling us that we ought to have joined the two subjects together, and who have occupied, I may say, the whole of our available time this year upon one—and that by much the simplest—part of the subject, likewise tell us that the other part—namely, the part relating to redistribution—is so complex that even separated from the franchise, and having the whole of the next session devoted to it, it is extremely improbable that it could pass by the 31st July. You may say Mr. Raikes is not a leader of that party; but I will tell you what happened. Only one or two days afterwards one of the late Cabinet said the same thing. Mr. W. H. Smith said that such was the nature of the subject of redistribution that we could not expect to pass the Redistribution Bill before the end of the year, under the most favourable circumstances. That is to say, by itself it must necessarily occupy the whole of the session. How, gentlemen, in point—I won't say, of truth—I won't say, of accuracy—but in point of decency—how is it possible after that for this party to found itself on the position, and to make this the main

head and front of its action, that our great and capital offence is not to have proposed at once two subjects, upon one of which we had already taken a whole session, whilst for the other they tell us themselves that another session will hardly be sufficient? Do they really want redistribution? They are calling out for the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill, mimicking and appropriating very lawlessly the saying—the well-known saying of Mr. Joseph Hume. Do they wish redistribution, or are they using it for the purpose of stopping redistribution and franchise both? Can we get evidence upon that subject? I won't ask you to take it upon my assertion alone; but who has been the great organ of the Tory party of late years? That distinguished and extraordinary man, Lord Beaconsfield. When Lord Beaconsfield and the gentlemen who now confront us were in office, for between six and seven years, what did they then say, and what did they then do, about the franchise and redistribution? They now say, 'We don't object. We are the best friends of reform; only give us it in conjunction with redistribution.' Well, but in the year 1876 that is the very thing which Mr. Trevelyan did. He introduced two resolutions into the House of Commons, one for the extension of the franchise, and the other for the redistribution of seats. And what said the great leader, the great educator of the Conservative party? It was the business of Mr. Disraeli to reply upon that occasion. He, first of all, objected to the extension of the franchise, which, he said, would evidently entail redistribution; and what did he say of redistribution? He then being in power, he then not having, as we have had, any load of legislation on his hands,—for you know that the six years of the late Government were as nearly as possible a blank in legislation,—he said: 'What did redistribution mean? It meant the break up of the borough constituencies. It would alter the character and destroy the variety of Parliamentary representation.' And, therefore, he exhorted the House to reject the motion; and the plan of Mr. Trevelyan for dealing jointly with the two subjects—for doing the very thing, if it could have been done, which they tell us now they are so anxious to do—was rejected, at the instance of Mr. Disraeli, and by the aid of Sir Richard Cross and Sir Stafford Northcote and Mr. Smith and all these authorities, by a majority of 264 to, I think, 169.

REDISTRIBUTION WITH FRANCHISE IMPOSSIBLE.

Under these circumstances I think I have shown you that the condition they ask of us is an impossible condition. It could not be done. It could be done, if they wished to co-operate for it; but I have shown you that, when they had the opportunity of speaking their sincere opinions, they spoke against it,

and that what they say now is wrung from them by hard necessity, inasmuch as they dare not say that they are opposed to the franchise, and they know no effective method of stopping the Franchise Bill unless they can stop it by putting upon its shoulders the enormous weight of redistribution. It is just as reasonable in a lane, which will only admit one carriage, to try and force two down it abreast, as it is for us, in the face of a hostile minority, to join the franchise and redistribution. Let the first carriage go first, the other will follow readily. They know perfectly well that, if we get the franchise, redistribution will follow, and must follow,—that the large numbers enfranchised in the counties will not endure, and ought not to endure, the continuance of the present system under which the smaller boroughs appropriate a share of the representation undoubtedly much larger than they are entitled to. After the passing of the Franchise Bill it is an absolute certainty that the passing of a Bill for redistribution will follow. And that is understood by our opponents just as well as by us. They have studied those arts very deeply. They are great proficient in them. I must give them the credit due to them. When there is an indirect method of warfare to be pursued, these high-minded and chivalrous people, who represent everything that is lofty in our institutions, everything that is venerable, everything that is above the grovelling considerations of temporary utility—this chivalrous party, which calls itself constitutional, and calls itself national, and calls itself patriotic, and has almost exhausted the whole catalogue of good epithets in Johnson's Dictionary to describe its own virtues, when they find themselves—I am not now speaking of the majority in the House of Lords—I am speaking of the minority in the House of Commons, for which I have reserved this particular compliment—when they find themselves in a position in which it is convenient to say one thing, while internally they have in view another, I say there are no greater masters of that particular art than the constitutional and chivalrous politicians with whom we have to deal. They call for franchise and redistribution—take this as a household word upon the subject—because they want neither, and because they know that to force us to unite the two is the only method, and is the effectual method, of stopping them both.

OBJECTS OF GOVERNMENT.

Well, gentlemen, under these circumstances, I have but one sentence more to say. I think I am justified in saying we have striven to avoid this conflict. We, the Ministers of the Crown, are anxious, so far as we are permitted, not to extend its sphere. We feel bound, in a friendly sense, to warn the House of Lords to allow the extension; but at the same time I have endeavoured to argue this question so as to make an appeal to the reason of that assembly, and

not to its fears. I will not abandon the hope that reason will prevail, until painful demonstration compels me to relinquish it. In the meantime, I make this, which I think a moderate proposition. I have shown that the combination of the Bills, which they ask of us, is an impracticable course for us to follow. I have shown that the dissent on one of the Bills leaves it certain, even supposing our promises are good for nothing, that redistribution must follow franchise. I have shown that it is unwise and dangerous for the hereditary chamber on a great constitutional issue to court a direct conflict with the representative House, which proceeds from the people, which returns to the people, and which, if the people are dissatisfied with its action, is punished by the people, as the Parliament of 1874 was punished in 1880 by the indignant action of the country. It is that House of Parliament which, while it lasts, and until the Crown dissolves it, or until its legal term is reached, represents the people of the country. In those circumstances, the hereditary chamber is unwise if it seeks a conflict with such a body. The consideration of its own interests, and the larger and more generous view which its minority has taken, and which its majority, I trust, will be induced to take, ought to show them that they may trust those classes in the counties which they have trusted in the towns; that the nation is attached to its laws and to its institutions; that the accession to the number of the constituencies will be an accession to the strength of the Empire; that the Throne will stand yet more firmly upon a broader foundation; and that every consideration alike of principle and of policy, and even of narrow and selfish interest—if that must be appealed to—dictates that they should no longer tamper with the question, but seize the first opportunity of giving a ready assent to the Franchise Bill.

The right hon. gentleman, having spoken for an hour and forty minutes, sat down amid loud and prolonged cheering.

SECOND SPEECH

IN

THE CORN EXCHANGE, EDINBURGH,

1st SEPTEMBER 1884.

MR. USHER of Norton moved that the Earl of Stair take the chair.

The majority of the noblemen and gentlemen who accompanied the Chairman to the platform at the previous meeting were also present on this occasion.

Besides Electors and Non-Electors of Midlothian and members of the Scottish Liberal Association, Delegates from 128 Scottish, 21 English, and 4 Irish Associations were also present.

LORD STAIR then introduced Mr. Gladstone, who addressed the meeting as follows:—

My Lord Stair, my Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—Once more I address you, the electors of Midlothian, in this old citadel of freedom, the noble city of Edinburgh, and I cannot, though perhaps it is going beyond my duty, and anticipating the last office of the meeting—I cannot help thanking our noble Chairman for the hearty and heart-stirring speech with which he has opened our proceedings. My Lord Stair, you have only anticipated my office in stating that I could not forget, even amidst the exigencies of the great political controversy of the hour—I could not forget the duty incumbent upon me of rendering to you some account of the manner in which I have endeavoured to discharge the trust committed to me, and to redeem the pledges which you have gathered from my previous declarations.

ALLEGED MIDLOTHIAN PROMISES OF 1880.

I cannot better introduce that portion of the subject than by quoting a passage which gave me some entertainment and a good deal of astonishment—a passage ascribed to Lord Salisbury in a recent speech where he describes the promises of

Ministers. The words given to him by the reporter—and I have not heard that they are untrue given—are these: ‘In 1880 they gave promise after promise; they held out before you a splendid picture of reduced taxes, of peace all over the world, of Ireland pacified, of trade revived.’ Now, it would be impertinence in me to suppose that Lord Salisbury had me principally or wholly in his mind when he delivered that sentence; but yet, considering how fond the Tories have been throughout these four years of making vague references, and therefore perfectly worthless references, to the speeches made in Midlothian, I presume that Lord Salisbury had them partially in his view; and what I wish respectfully to say is this, that so far as he had them in his view, so far as they have reference to anything said by me and heard by you, the sentence that I have read is a pure and perfect work of the imagination. Gentlemen, I made you no brilliant promises; I drew for you no splendid picture. I drew for you, on the contrary, a dismal exhibition of all the mischiefs that we had before us. If I could have addressed the Government of Lord Beaconsfield, especially in its latest years, while Lord Salisbury was its Foreign Minister—I would truly have addressed it in the words of Tennyson:

‘The children born of thee are fire and sword;
Red ruin and the breaking up of laws.’

For war, wherever their policy went—war, gratuitously provoked, waited on their footsteps; and law, on the other hand,—I mean the highest of all law, European law,—shrank abashed and despaired into the shade. It was no splendid picture, but this dismal picture which I ventured to present to you. I told you, gentlemen, in the plainest language, that the mischiefs done by that Government would not and could not terminate with its political existence.

‘The evil that men do lives after them.’

And, unfortunately, in no department of human existence is that proposition more profoundly and more disastrously true than it is in this wide world of politics, where the deeds of individual statesmen tell with a vital power upon the weal or woe of millions of their fellow-creatures. It was a deplorable inheritance to which I ventured to tell you the successors of Lord Salisbury would succeed. It has been a deplorable inheritance; and what I have to recount to you is the manner in which, and the degree of partial success with which we have endeavoured to confront the difficulties surrounding us on every hand, which were the legacy, and, in truth, the only legacy, bequeathed to us by the former Administration.

FINANCE.

(1) Reduction of Taxation.

Gentlemen, in particular, Lord Salisbury’s lively imagination has supplied him—and I have not the slightest doubt he thinks he is

speaking the absolute truth with the statement that we promised you a reduction of taxes. In the weary wilderness of my Midlothian speeches—those of you who could undertake, if any could, to toil through them from the beginning to the end—I doubt very much whether you would find—I almost venture to say you will not find—a single promise of a reduction of taxes or of a reign of economy, because I knew very well that the foundation which the former Government had laid, the engagements which they had made, and the difficulties which they had stored up all over the world, made it almost hopeless to look for the advent of such a happy period. Let me, then, as briefly and as clearly as I can, run over to you what was the financial position of affairs that we had to look in the face at that time, and what were the censures which I ventured to bestow on the conduct of the Government. I found fault with the Government for the enormous increase of expenditure. I found still more fault with them, gentlemen, for having broken every rule of sound finance. I quite admit that under given circumstances increase of expenditure may be sometimes even desirable, and often unavoidable; but, gentlemen, the propositions that I laid down for you were these, that there were certain laws still more important than economy in expenditure. One of them was, that, whatever you did, you should take care to pay your way; and another was, that, in times when the resources of the country are great and the calls upon it moderate, you should reduce the weight of that enormous debt,—the fruit of former wars which we have inherited from our forefathers. It may be that in some places Tory speakers will take upon them to open this chapter of finance. Let us see how they will be able to dispose of it. I take for the first vital principle, that, whatever you do, if you wish for honest and sound finance, you must pay your way—that is, you must take care, in the absence of causes absolutely imperative to the contrary, that the balance at the close of the year is on the right side. I take then the four years of the present Government, and I compare them with the four last years of the late Government; I won’t give you wearisome details by going through them year by year, but I give you the result. The four last balance-sheets of the late Government presented an aggregate deficiency of £7,330,000. The four years of the present Government, though our charges have been most heavy—and I admit the period has not been one of high fiscal or commercial prosperity—have not presented a single deficit, but have, on the whole, given a surplus of £1,580,000. So now you are in a condition to judge whether I was warranted in exposing to you for your censure and condemnation the utter laxity of the former Government in regard to this capital article of finance, and in telling you that, whatever we did, we ought to pay our way. So much for the first Midlothian pledge.

(2) Reduction of the National Debt.

Gentlemen, you will bear me out, perhaps, in the recollection that I attached the greatest value and importance to resolute action in the reduction of our still gigantic National Debt. How do we stand on that chapter, comparing our deeds with the deeds of our predecessors? In the four last years of the Beaconsfield Administration they paid off £10,984,000 of National Debt. In four years of the present Administration—the only four entire years—we paid off £25,045,000. So that upon that chapter we show to you an improvement, at any rate, of £14,000,000. We hope that on the 31st March, at the close of the present financial year, the repayment of debt during this Government will have reached £33,000,000; and the repayment of £33,000,000 of debt means a total abolition of £1,000,000 of permanent burden necessary to be provided for out of the standard income of the country. Further, I am happy to say that the consequence of this system has been to produce a vigorous state of public credit, and a perfect confidence in the administration of the national resources, far beyond the region of party in that impartial world—the financial world of the City of London—of such a character that my able and skilful friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been able to propose to Parliament, and to carry through Parliament, a Bill for the voluntary conversion of the 3 per cent. Stock, of which we may reasonably say, from the prospects already afforded, that it is pretty certain to result in a further considerable saving and alleviation of the permanent public burdens of the country. So much for the second financial pledge of the Midlothian campaign.

(3) The Malt-Tax.

Now, about the reduction of taxes—a favourite subject with Lord Salisbury. We promised to you nothing; but when we got into office we knew that for forty years the farmers, not of Scotland, but of England, had been told, and especially the candidates for their suffrages, had been in the habit at general elections of telling them, that there was one burden of tremendous weight and cruel injustice which they had to bear, and that burden was the malt-tax. It is quite true that the malt-tax was never heard of in the House of Commons, except when a Liberal Government was in office. When a Liberal Government was in office, pretty nearly annual motions were made for its repeal, as the welfare of British agriculture depended upon it. When the Tory Government was in office, the malt-tax and its advocates, like certain virgins in the parable, slumbered and slept. Though we had not much money to give, yet we believed that this would be a most valuable administrative and commercial change; and in the year 1880

we were enabled to repeal the malt-tax, and to substitute a beer duty. But, lo and behold! what a transformation in the minds of men! From the moment that it was felt that the Tories had broken every pledge that they ever made about the malt-tax, and when we, on the contrary, had taken up the subject and repealed it—from that moment they had the boldness to come forward and to say that it was a trumpery affair, and that the change which we had made was a thing of very insignificant consequence.

(4) The Death Duties.

I found fault, in addressing you, with the gross, and even the cruel anomalies in what are known as the 'death duties'; and I found fault with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Government then existing, because he had not cured these anomalies. One of these, gentlemen, was that, upon proceeding to administer the estate of a deceased person, the probate duty had to be paid upon the entire debts of that person. Suppose the value of the estate was £20,000, and that there were £19,000 of debt upon it, you had to pay duty in the first instance upon the £20,000. It is quite true that at the close of a long process of administration the probate duty—I beg pardon for using a foreign term: in Scotland you call it the inventory duty,—it is quite true that at the close of the process this money was returned. But to find the money was no joke in many cases, and to pay it into the hands of a public department without interest,—to be dependent upon your being able to go through the settlement of the whole affairs, and produce every voucher,—undoubtedly left that payment on the debts as a heavy grievance. We have abolished that payment.

(5) Taxation of Small Properties.

Gentlemen, there was a more serious grievance, and that was the grievance of persons who came into small properties—I mean by small properties extremely small properties—properties of £100, £200, or £300. You know what happened to them. If they wished to realize the property of a deceased person to which they were entitled, the first thing they had to do was to go to their legal adviser, if they had one, or to find a legal adviser for the occasion. I have the greatest respect for legal advisers—we could not get on without them; but they can't work for nothing, and as their work is obliged to be very accurate and highly responsible, it is necessarily dear work. The consequence was that, in the case of these small properties, it was not simply the duty paid to the Government, for that was insignificant, and under £100 it was none at all; but it

was this—that bills of £10, £20, or £30 were easily run up and necessarily run up by the solicitor, or the writer in Scotland, and a very heavy deduction made from very small estates. We have not had much to give—I have told you that the Exchequer has not been very rich—but we have introduced this change into the law—that wherever the property is under £300 the person now who is entitled to it has no need to go to his legal adviser at all. He has nothing to do but to make known the case to the revenue officer of the district, and for the payment of a perfectly trifling duty—I think it is twenty or thirty shillings—the information necessary is all given, and the assets are handed over. Although this may appear to some a small matter—and I am not saying that it is of capital importance—yet this I can say, that the people who are reaping the advantage of that arrangement every year are between five-and-twenty and thirty thousand, or at the rate of more than five hundred for every week that we live.

EXPENDITURE SINCE 1880.

I have another point to touch, and that is, the point of economy. I cannot present to you, gentlemen, in the matter of economy, a satisfactory result. That has been realized which, in 1880, it was too easy to foresee. The expenditure of the country has continued to be very heavy. Whether we might have reduced it more, I won't undertake to say. If you censure me, I submit to the censure. We have had much to do; we have worked hard. We have had heavy calls and heavy responsibilities. Perhaps, if our hands had been more free and our minds less occupied, we might have been able to present to you a more favourable result. But I will tell you what have been the main causes that have kept up the expenditure of the country. First of all there has been a natural and normal growth of certain charges—a desirable growth of certain charges—such as the Education vote. The Education vote grows rapidly from year to year; and who is there among the thousands I address that would wish to check its growth? You in Scotland know too well its value. You know too well how education has acted and contributed so largely to place Scotland in the van of the civilized nations of the world, to grudge the charge which this great subject, with its increasing number of millions, lays upon you. As to the painful subject of increasing charge, much came upon us inevitably and irrevocably when we took office. There was a great increase of charge in the civil government of Ireland. But I do not hesitate to say this, that the main cause which has kept the expenditure of the country so high has been the military charge, which was mainly, if not entirely, due to the policy of the foregoing

Government, and the engagements with which they had saddled those who succeeded them. What I have said to you about public economy has been in the nature of a confession. I thought it candid and ingenuous towards you that it should be so, and that I should not seek to shelter myself behind the unsatisfactory defence that our predecessors had done worse than ourselves.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE EXPENDITURE OF THE PRESENT AND THE LATE GOVERNMENT.

But it is my duty to say a word upon that subject, and to warn you to be upon your guard against the Tories. That you may be on your guard against them I will give you, with the utmost exactness, comparative statements which it is quite impossible for them to shake, and which I will convey to you in no very great number of words, avoiding all detail, lumping large sums of money, and making use of round numbers for the sake of greater simplicity and intelligibility. In the four last years of the late Government the gross expenditure of the country was £329,000,000. In the four last years of the present Government—don't be alarmed, gentlemen—the expenditure of the country has been £342,000,000. Apparently, on comparing the accounts of the two Governments, our account is £13,000,000 to the bad. Let us look a little further into the matter. I must first of all deduct the expense of collection. You know we have vast establishments connected with the Post Office, and the Telegraphs, and so forth. To charge these as taxation would be absurd. I do not, therefore, take the expense of collection. I find that the two sums then are—for the late Government 297½ millions, and for the present Government 306½ millions. There are still 9½ millions remaining to the bad against us. But I go further, and I deduct the debt we have paid off, because undoubtedly what you spend in payment of debt ought not to be reckoned as expenditure. We have paid off, as I have told you, £25,000,000 of debt against £11,000,000; and consequently, when we bring this into account, we are no longer to the bad, but we are to the good by the amount of 4½ millions. So you see we are improving a little. Besides that, you may recollect that, having a deep sense of the iniquity, as well as the folly, of the war that had been waged in Afghanistan at the expense of India, we asked Parliament, in mitigation of that gross and monstrous injustice, to make a present to India of 5 millions. Parliament agreed, and 4½ millions out of that 5 millions we have already paid. Adding that to the 4½ millions by which our charge fell short (I mean our voluntary charge, that which ought to be laid to our account) of the charge of the former Government, then we come to stand 9½ millions better upon the finance of the four

years. So far, I have been dealing with matters of fact, and no man can shake one of the figures I have laid before you. I go now to matter of opinion, and it is my opinion—and I believe it to be yours—that at the state of things we found in South Africa, and the annexation of the Transvaal, made it inevitable that war charges should come upon us. These war charges were $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions. I then come to that unfortunate question of Egypt, on which I will by and by explain myself more fully. There were in the same manner $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions of military charge which we have defrayed in Egypt, in consequence, as we hold, of the policy of our predecessors. That makes a sum of 7 millions of expenditure which ought not to be laid to our charge, and which ought to be added to the $9\frac{1}{4}$ millions that I previously mentioned; so that we claim to stand upon the four years, so far as our voluntary action in the use of your money is concerned, $16\frac{1}{4}$ millions better than the Government that went before us. Of course, in saying that, I have taken no credit for the larger education vote; we have had to provide, I have taken no credit for the heavy charges we have been obliged to meet in Ireland for great social and administrative purposes; but $16\frac{1}{4}$ millions is the sum I claim as representing the clear and sheer improvement on our financial administration, compared with that of those that went before us—7 millions of it open to be described by them as matter of opinion, $9\frac{1}{4}$ millions of it as matter of fact, which it is impossible for them to shake. I have told you as much as I could, in not a very long compass, upon the very important subject of finance.

IRELAND POLITICALLY AND SOCIALLY.

I must say one word to you on the still more important subject of Ireland. It did not enter into my addresses to you, for what reason I know not; but the Government that was then in power rather, I think, kept back from Parliament—certainly were not forward to lay before Parliament—what was going on in Ireland until the day of the dissolution came, and the address of Lord Beaconsfield was published, undoubtedly in very menacing terms. I call it an address: it was called a letter to the Duke of Marlborough, but it was virtually an address. I frankly admit I had had much upon my hands connected with the doings of that Government in almost every quarter of the world, and I did not know, no one knew, the severity of the crisis that was already swelling upon the horizon, and that shortly after rushed upon us like a flood. For two years out of the four during which we have exercised the powers conferred upon us by the nation and by the Crown, the time of Parliament was almost entirely occupied in 1881 and 1882, with Irish affairs. We had to encounter evils of a magnitude that it will be the

business of the historian to describe. There was arrayed in Ireland what I must call a great conspiracy against social order, which took the form of an injunction to the people of Ireland, an agricultural people, to break their contracts and pay no rent to their landlords. It was no small matter to confront such a conspiracy. If some popular leaders (which is utterly impossible) were to issue a manifesto in Edinburgh desiring the people of Scotland to break their contracts, why, gentlemen, such a manifesto would be waste-paper. In Ireland, where unhappily the history of the country has not taught nor accustomed the people to love the law, it had a very different character, and the whole foundations of social order throughout that country were disturbed and well-nigh broken up by the effect of that manifesto and by the proceedings both preceding and following it, which tended in the same direction. It has been one of our most anxious and arduous duties to confront that conspiracy, and I rejoice to say at this moment it is broken up. It exists no longer. Trouble there may be in Ireland. It has not got such a settlement of social relations as England and Scotland happily possess; but that trouble is brought within manageable bounds and limits, and the conspiracy is a thing of the past. Mr. Parnell, the able leader of those who conducted that conspiracy, has taken—I might almost say has made for himself—an opportunity in Parliament of declaring that the man who would attempt to stop the payment of rent in Ireland (and rent, I need not say, involves all other contracts in its train) must be a madman. Well, that conspiracy had for one of its effects the production of a terrible state of disorder in the country. Agrarian crime has long more or less affected it, but the figures representing the amount of that crime underwent a frightful increase. In the year 1881 there were 4439 agrarian offences, among a population of five millions, reported to the Government; in 1883 that frightful list of agrarian offences had sunk to 870; and in the seven months of 1884, which, of course, do not afford full means of comparison, there is no sign whatever of an increase. I may also say, with thankful satisfaction, that not the quantity only, but the quality of those crimes has undergone a change. In the year 1881, which I quoted for the vast amount of its agrarian crime, there were between twenty and thirty agrarian murders. Even before the increase of crime, and when the total of offences was a small total (for example, between 1878 and 1880), there were, in the first of these years, eight agrarian murders; in the second of these years, ten agrarian murders; and in the third, eight agrarian murders—no small number. I am thankful to say that in the year 1883 there was but one agrarian murder in all Ireland; and in the seven months of 1884, for which I hold the account in my hand, there has not been a single agrarian murder. That is not all. With great labour, and under a pressure of circumstances which forbade the use of ordinary arms and methods—for the state of Ireland would not

bear to be trifled with—with great labour, and so far favoured by the condition of Ireland, we passed the Irish Land Act. By means of that Irish Land Act I feel confident that almost every case of over-renting in Ireland has been touched, excepting, perhaps, some cases where leases had been given, and where we felt ourselves precluded by considerations of principle from allowing the rent to be reconsidered. But speaking generally of the people of Ireland, who are a people of annual tenancies, we may say that over-renting is virtually at an end. It is quite true that £540,000 have been taken off upon the aggregate from the rents of the landlords; but I believe that that was in the main a debt of justice. You can bear me witness—and the farmers of England can bear me witness—that the period in which that has been done by the judicial action of the Land Court in Ireland has been a period in which every wise landlord, or most wise landlords in Scotland and in England, have found occasion, and some unwise landlords have found necessity, to reduce the rents paid upon their farms. I am happy to say that the effect of this Act is that it is inducing people for the first time to place confidence in the Courts of Justice. It is laying the foundation of that harmony between the people and the law which is, of all other objects, the most familiar to us on this side of the Channel, but which, unhappily, is foreign and is new in the history of Irish associations. It is a foundation of good, on which I feel assured that the people may build; and, although I regret that the landlords of Ireland—a portion of the landlords of Ireland (for it is not, after all, more than one-fourth part of them, or something like that, that has been called into Court) have been called to make a sacrifice, yet I feel convinced that the greater solidity of the social state which these changes are bringing about will repay them for everything they are called upon to surrender. I do not represent to you that the Irish question is altogether settled. But, Parliamentary and political difficulties are one thing; social difficulties are another. Social difficulties destroy the peace and comfort of private life, and break up the relations of classes, families, and men throughout the country. With these social difficulties, under the able guidance of Lord Spencer, the Irish Government has manfully and, I trust, effectually grappled. There may again be outbursts of crime, but nothing, I believe, like what we have had to contend with is to be feared in the future of that most interesting country. Parliamentary and political difficulties there will be. I have no doubt, none whatever, that the organization of what is termed the Nationalist party in Ireland will for some little time disturb the action of our Parliamentary system. There will be time wasted; there will be measures obstructed; there will be a good deal of trial of temper; perhaps now and then a Ministry will be overturned, possibly a Parliament dissolved; but I don't gratuitously or without considera-

tion undertake the office of a prophet—rely, gentlemen, upon this, that so long as you continue to pursue a course of justice and liberality towards Ireland, although you may still have a residue of trouble handed over to you from the mistakes of former generations, yet nothing can happen in Ireland which will abate the strength of this mighty Empire—nothing which can seriously trouble its imperial action; and under no circumstances can it happen that Ireland can be dissevered, in her fate and her fortunes—and it would be the greatest misfortune for her if she could—from Great Britain.

FOREIGN POLICY TREATED GENERALLY.

I have spoken chiefly of domestic matters; but I ask you to accompany me over sea. You have heard much about the foreign policy of this country; and I am sorry to say that the position of parties in this country has undergone, with respect to foreign policy, what I conceive to be a disastrous, and perhaps a dangerous change. In the first twenty years of my political life there was no broad difference of principle between the Liberal and the Conservative party in regard to foreign politics. They were not in the habit of calling one another names in respect to foreign politics, as we, unfortunately, have found occasion to do in the last few years. I should say myself, though it is long since I was their subordinate, that the ideas of Sir Robert Peel, of the Duke of Wellington, and of my dear and honoured friend, my loved friend, Lord Aberdeen, in respect to foreign politics were perfect in every point except one. They were perfect in the love of peace; they were perfect in the equal regard they paid to the rights of all other nations; they were perfect in their respect for public law; and they would have been perfect all round, in my opinion, if they had included that more lively sympathy with constitutional freedom in other countries, which, I think, it has been the proper work of the Liberal party to supply. But you know what the Conservative party are now in their foreign politics. The Conservative party of the first twenty years of my life were the peace party of the country—most distinctly they were the peace party of the country; and, were you to examine the debates of those years, you would find that upon almost every occasion the Tories of that day, under Peel, the Duke of Wellington, and Lord Aberdeen, found fault with the Liberal party because they were not sufficiently lovers of peace. Judge therefore the enormous space over which the Tories of to-day have travelled in departing from the wisdom of their forefathers. Now I need not detain you long in giving you my idea of foreign policy. In my judgment we, secure in our island home,

and in the strength of loyal hearts and arms by which it has for so many ages been defended, have no occasion to bow down to any one or to flatter any man upon earth. We are far less dependent upon the Powers of the Continent of Europe, though I hope we will always be glad to acknowledge a dependence of goodwill and mutual right upon them—we are far less dependent upon the Powers of the Continent of Europe, be they great or be they small, than those Powers are upon one another. Under these circumstances, in my judgment, it is a prime duty incumbent upon us to take care that this sense of strength, founded upon history and founded upon fact, does not betray us into a temper of arrogance, and does not weaken for a moment our determination to live so far as depends upon us, in goodwill with all the world. Let us take for our rule that simple rule drawn from the highest source, and endeavour to behave to each and to all of them as we wish them to behave to us. I believe, gentlemen, that in the application of that simple rule (I won't say you will find it a universal nostrum for the disposal of political difficulties) that nine problems out of every ten will be solved by a country like this which has power in its hands to back it in the cause of justice, but which abhors the idea of using that power for any less sacred purpose.

Now I will give you a very small example of what I think is the temper in which we should approach subjects of this kind. You may have noticed in the newspapers that there is at the present time in Germany a very great desire to found colonies abroad; and in some of the German papers I read with much regret a statement, which I believe to be totally unfounded, that the English people and the Scotch people look with an evil eye upon this anxiety of the Germans to found colonies abroad. I am speaking among five or six thousand Scotchmen, and I appeal to you fearlessly, and I tell you that, if Germany has the means of expanding herself and sending her children to unoccupied places of the earth, with due regard to the previous rights of other nations, and with due regard to the rights of the aboriginal inhabitants—subject to those two reserves, gentlemen, I tell you I look with satisfaction, sympathy, and joy upon the expansion of Germany in these desert places of the earth, upon the extension of civilization, and upon the blessing to these waste places by the presence of an intelligent, industrious community, which will bring forth from the bosom of the land new resources for the comfort, advantage, and happiness of mankind. Do not suppose for a moment that it is anything but the utmost meanness for us to be jealous of Germany. Germany cannot rob this country, even if she desired it, of her colonizing faculty. It is evident—no man can deny it—that it is among the most patent and palpable facts of the condition of the world, that God Almighty has given to the people who inhabit these islands a great function and a great duty of coloniza-

tion. And that duty has been fulfilled by a pretty liberal appropriation of the countries which have not been occupied. Come what may, gentlemen, let every other country do what it will—it is for them to consider how far their political strength will be increased by it. Into that question I do not enter. That is no matter for me to discuss at all. If I had an opinion I would not say what it was. But this I do say, that it is a function which they can only exercise as colonists with advantage to themselves and to us; and I wish them God-speed in the work, so far as we, and—I am certain I may say it with safety—so far as the British nation is concerned.

FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 1880.

Montenegro and Greece.

I must now ask you to give me a few minutes on what constituted a voluminous—I am afraid I must say very voluminous—portion of our discussions in Midlothian in 1879 and 1880—namely, the condition of foreign politics. At that time, the Treaty of Berlin had been concluded; but there were two territorial questions left unsettled at the moment when we came into office, each of which was a positive danger to the peace of Europe. One was, that the Treaty of Berlin had recognised in the clearest terms the rights of the gallant people of Montenegro to an extension of their territory. No effectual step whatever had been taken to give them that extension. Letters, which were but idle words, and passed away like the wind, had been written, but no progress whatever had been made, and there was not the slightest movement in that direction, nor hope of attainment of the end. In the same way, rather less definitely, the Treaty of Berlin had recognised the title of Greece to an extension of territory. No progress, again, had been made towards inducing the Sultan to grant that extension. Both these questions were entirely stagnant. It was one of our first duties to apply ourselves to them. I will not enter upon details. We induced the Powers of Europe to send ships of war to the coast of Albania. It is quite true that they were very loath to do anything more than send representative ships of war to that coast; but the Government of the Queen did not rest satisfied with that state of things. It is not necessary for me, and I know it would be of no advantage at this moment to explain in detail the steps we took; but we did take steps to show that we were in earnest, and to show that we thought that the dangers which menaced the peace of Europe in connection with these two territorial questions ought to be obviated by prompt concession on the part of the Porte. I rejoice to say that both these questions were speedily closed. A considerable addition was made

to the territory of Montenegro; and Thessaly, an ancient part of classical Greece from the very earliest ages, was added to the territory of the Greek kingdom. And although it is true that there are many unsolved problems in the condition of the Turkish Empire, and that the East of Europe may for a length of time be more or less a subject of anxiety, yet those immediate causes of danger have been removed, and these most legitimate aspirations and claims have been effectually satisfied. When we are told that we neglected the pledges we gave to you, and that the appeals which we made to you on behalf of the Slav race and of the kingdom of Greece were mere idle words, you can point to these results, and challenge the objector to question them if he can.

Afghanistan.

A still sadder case, gentlemen, was the case of Afghanistan. Afghanistan was a country in which we had sinned heavily forty years before, but we were conscious of that sin. A long series of illustrious statesmen in the office of Governor-General, including in one case at least—perhaps in more—a Tory statesman, the excellent Lord Mayo, had laboured with an unwearied patience to efface the memory of the former error and the former crime, and to build up relations of peace and amity with the brave mountaineers of Afghanistan. But under the policy of the two last years of Lord Beaconsfield's Government this was all reversed; and by an undertaking which, I think, united criminality and folly in a higher degree than any undertaking in my recollection, the united kingdom of Afghanistan was broken to pieces: its valleys were deluged with blood, its people were again provoked into hatred of England; and if anything could by possibility have effectually promoted that supposititious ambition of Russia, about which your susceptibilities are sometimes practised upon—if anything could have made the ambition of Russia really formidable, it was undoubtedly to throw the people of Afghanistan by our hostile measures into the arms of the Emperor. A Russian lady of great ability—a very clever political writer, known as Madame Novikoff—published an excellent book written from a Russian point of view—very properly written from a Russian point of view, for she was a Russian lady. She said this: 'You are dreadfully afraid of us Russians lest we should interfere with you in India. You had got a double barrier between us and India. You had a moral and a human barrier of a brave people who for many years had been attached to you. You had also the great physical barrier of a mass of mountains; and behind this double barrier you might have felt tolerably secure. But what have you done? The moral barrier you have destroyed, and have taught the Afghans to hate you; and really one might believe that, if you could, you would have destroyed the physical barrier also. But, happily for

you, those mountains of the Hindu Koosh, which encircle Afghanistan on every side, are a great deal too big to shovel away, and so you still may enjoy whatever profit you can get from the existence of a great physical barrier between us and Afghanistan.' Such was the state of things with regard to Afghanistan when we came into office, and I should not give you a full conception of it without telling you this, that the number of British and Indian forces required to be in Afghanistan itself, or detailed for the guardianship of the north-western frontier, as the fruit of the Beaconsfield and Salisbury policy, was about 65,000 men. What has happened now? Under Lord Ripon, Lord Hartington, and Lord Kimberley, this, I am thankful to say, has happened. Afghanistan is no longer torn in pieces. It is again one Afghanistan. It enjoys in a sense—in the modified sense in which the term can be applied to a country of that kind, though it does not come up to our standard—it enjoys some kind of peace, unity, and order. Kindly relations are again being built up between India and the Afghan ruler and his people; and when I last made the inquiry, instead of 65,000 of our soldiers being detailed for the defence of the north-western frontier and the occupation of Afghanistan, 25,000 are now sufficient for that work, and 40,000 are available for other purposes.

India—Liberty of the Press.

I detain you long; but these questions are of such gravity that they would warrant, and perhaps deserve, a fuller and a better exposition. You may remember that I deplored to you, in the strongest terms I could use, the strange and guilty infatuation under which the British Government had, in the latter portion of Lord Beaconsfield's Administration, taken away from the people of India that precious boon of liberty of the press which had been given them half a century before, and which they never had misused. Suddenly, in the dark, in the privacy of the Legislative Chamber—I believe in answer to orders sent by telegraph—without the knowledge of Parliament, without the knowledge of the country, a law was passed which totally extinguished the freedom of the native Indian press. I frankly tell you—whether other men agree with me or not I don't know—I think a law such as that a disgrace to civilization, and a disgrace to the British Empire. We denounced that law. Have we redeemed that pledge? Yes, gentlemen, the law has been effaced from the statute-book of India; and never, I am sure, while the Liberal party has a voice to raise in this country, or a share in the government of its affairs, never again will such an outrage be perpetrated upon every principle of freedom that is dear to the heart of England and of Scotland.

South Africa.

I pass to South Africa. We told you that in our judgment the attempt of the Administration then in power to put down the people of the Transvaal, to extinguish their freedom, and to annex them against their will to England, was a scandalous and a disastrous attempt. When we got into office we were assured by all the local agents of the British Government—and I have no doubt they spoke in honour and sincerity—we were assured that the people of the Transvaal had changed their minds, and were perfectly contented to be annexed to the British Empire. That made it our duty to pause for a while; and for a short while, accordingly, we did pause. However much we had opposed the previous Government, it was our duty not to make changes without good and sufficient cause. But before we had been very long in office, the people of the Transvaal rose in arms, and showed us pretty well what their feelings and intentions were; and they obtained several successes over the limited body of British troops then in South Africa. We felt it was an absolute duty, under those circumstances, to reinforce our military power in that region; and we sent a force to South Africa which would unquestionably have been sufficient to defeat any power that the Dutch Burghers—the Boers—could bring into the field against us. But the Boers asked us for an accommodation. What is called the Jingo party in this country was horribly scandalized, because we listened to that application. We had got our forces there, ready to chastise them. We might have shed their blood; we might have laid prostrate on the field hundreds, possibly thousands, of that small community, and then we should have vindicated the reputation of this country, according to the creed of that particular party. Having undoubted power in our hands, we thought—and I believe that you thought—that the time to be merciful is when you are strong. We were strong; we could afford to be merciful. We entered into arrangement with the Transvaal, and the Transvaal at this moment, not in every point, but in the main and for practical purposes, has recovered its independence. You will see in the Tory organs—I read it in the last of them that I consulted, the *Quarterly Review*—that we threw away the Transvaal. Well, gentlemen, if you found that you had a snake in your hands that was going to inflict a poisonous bite upon you, you would very likely throw it away; and the case of the Transvaal might have been worse than that. Why did we give up the Transvaal? We gave it up on considerations of honour, and on considerations of policy. What was the consideration of honour? It was this—that, when the scheme for taking it was first mooted, Lord Carnarvon, who was Secretary of State (I think it was Lord Carnarvon, but if not, it was his successor, Sir Michael Hicks Beach) declared in the name of this

country that we only intended to take the Transvaal if it were agreeable to the sense of the population—meaning the white population. What happened? There were 8000 white settlers in the Transvaal—that was the computed number of adult heads of families, the gross number being, I think, about 40,000. Out of these 8000, about 1000 were English and miscellaneous, and about 7000 were Dutchmen—men of strong and masculine fibre, reared in that school of Calvinism which, whatever else may be said of it, made your ancestors a very strong and determined race. And these 7000 men subscribed 7000 signatures to a petition protesting against their annexation to this country. I ask you whether it was possible,—in honour possible,—without the grossest and most shameless breach of faith, to persist in holding them when we had pledged ourselves beforehand that they should not be annexed except with their own goodwill? After stating to you such a case of honour as that, I am ashamed almost to refer to the subject of policy. But I will say one word upon that, and it is this—the people of the Transvaal, few in number, were in close and strong sympathy with their brethren in race, language, and religion. Throughout South Africa these men who are called Afrianders, partly British subjects and partly not, were as one man associated in feeling with the people of the Transvaal; and, had you persisted in that dishonourable attempt, against all your own interests, to coerce the Transvaal as you attempted to coerce Afghanistan, you would have had the whole mass of the Dutch population at the Cape and throughout South Africa rising in arms against you. So much for the Transvaal, and I am not aware that there is to be said anything which could possibly form a deduction, a serious deduction, from the propositions I have now laid down.

Egypt.

I pass now to the question of Egypt, and I think there is an inquiry that you have a right to put to me—‘What took you to Egypt?’ You have a right to ask that. I am disposed to admit that almost everybody has a right to question and to find fault with our doings in Egypt, except the men who do question them. The men who do question them are the late Tory Government and their adherents, and they are the men whose acts and whose covenants compelled us to do the things we have done. I assert we have a right to their support and to their assistance in every form. Instead of that, from week to week, almost day to day, they have endeavoured, wherever they saw an opening in any doubtful or difficult circumstance, to make what is called political capital out of the case of Egypt. But, as I have said, you have a right to ask me, ‘What took you to Egypt?’ Well, gentlemen, it is not very like my usual method of proceeding,

nor very like the usual methods of proceeding with which my colleagues are conversant; but my answer to you when you say to me, 'What took you to Egypt?' is, 'Honour took me to Egypt—plighted faith took me to Egypt.' I make no apology; I am now speaking for myself. I am saying what acted on my own mind; and looking back upon it over the years that have elapsed, and with all the inconvenient consequences that have ensued, I cannot escape from that conclusion. We had no alternative choice except to commit what, in our eyes, would have been a breach of faith. How did this question stand? What was the beginning of our interference in Egypt? It first arose as a Parliamentary question, without any mischievous intention on the part of the Beaconsfield Government—it arose in 1876, and the opinion was then more or less hazarded that we ought to take into our hands some control of Egyptian finance. If you choose to refer to Hansard, you will find that when I heard that doctrine uttered, I did not lose a moment in protesting against it, and in saying that, if they once began by Government authority to touch Egyptian finance, probably the time would not be long before they would find themselves confronting the question whether they were to assume dominion over Egypt. That was in 1876. Lord Derby, now Secretary of State for the Colonies, was then Foreign Minister, and nothing of this kind was done as long as Lord Derby continued Foreign Minister. But when Lord Salisbury came into his place, the meddlesome disposition began to undergo a portentous development. Let me try to be fair. I do not launch at these Egyptian proceedings of Lord Salisbury the same kind of censure as at the guilty proceedings in Afghanistan. I believe they were well meant. I condemn them entirely in point of judgment and discretion, but I believe they were not ill meant. I do not believe they were schemes of ambition, but I believe it was a mistaken view to suppose that they could do more good, by going into Egypt in conjunction with France, in improving its administration, than could be done in any other way. I treat it simply as an error of judgment but it was a most unfortunate error of judgment. The Khedive of Egypt, the existing Khedive, was put down, another Khedive was put in his place by us and by France. France subsequently, in the exercise of her undoubted right to judge of her duties, withdrew, and left us to confront the sole execution of these engagements. But we set up the new Khedive, and by setting him up we became morally bound to support him; and not only so, but we entered into an actual covenant with the French to support him—to support the native government of Egypt. The consequence was, having in our hands the effectual control of the government, and having on the throne a sovereign whom we had put there, and who had not violated any of his duties, we were bound to sustain him. That is the history of the embarrassments into which we have been brought in that country. The considerations by which we have been guided in regulating Egyptian affairs have

been these: We have endeavoured to keep faith with the sovereign of the country. We have endeavoured to maintain the honour of the British arms. We have respected the sovereignty of the Porte, and the title of the European Powers to be consulted in all matters territorially affecting the Turkish Empire. We have discouraged the spirit of aggression as well as we could. We have contracted no embarrassing engagement—I won't go back now upon the engagement partially made with France, because it ceases to exist, and it would unnecessarily expend your time. We have endeavoured to regulate Egyptian finance upon the principle of a fair distribution of effort and sacrifice among all parties. And I greatly lament, gentlemen, the total failure of the late Conference of the Powers of Europe to solve the problem of Egyptian finance, because an assemblage of the European Powers is the great organ of civilized authority on behalf of the peace and happiness of Europe; and a gross failure such as this in the execution of a duty which, in our judgment at least, and in the judgment of two Powers amongst them, was perfectly practicable, is a very considerable blow to their authority.

EGYPT'S FUTURE.

Gentlemen, one point more. It is the best point. Perhaps I might say it is the only good point in the Egyptian case. Great improvements have been introduced into the administration of Egypt. You ask me how I know that? I know it by the impartial and intelligent reports of British agents on the spot—by the reports of Sir Evelyn Baring, who was lately there (and there is no abler man in the foreign service of the country), and by the report of Mr. Egerton, who is there now. Mr. Egerton says, in summing up a representation he has made: 'A revolution no less real in its way than many famous revolutionary changes has, I believe, resulted from the English occupation. A certain germ of independence is being developed among the peasantry.' I will not enter into details. But I do not hesitate to say that these changes, in the existence of which I believe—changes which, though called revolutionary, are peaceful, noiseless changes—and the happiness they may bring in their train to the six millions of the people of Egypt, are some compensation for all the care and anxiety of this Government and this people, and will, I hope, leave behind us, when we quit Egypt, traces that are honourable to the British name.

GENERAL GORDON.

For the honour of the British name, we are now engaged in considering the best means we can adopt in order to fulfil our obligations

to the gallant General Gordon. We do not know, from the unhappy intercepting of communication, what his present condition, occupations, and views may be, or, therefore, precisely what those obligations are; but we are putting ourselves in a condition to fulfil them, whatever they may be; and in so doing I believe we are acting upon what would be the general and reasonable wish of the people of this country, which will never allow its agents,—while they are honourably endeavouring to give effect to its policy, to be abandoned. I do not know what may be happening to General Gordon, but what I rather expect is this—should the mission of General Gordon fail, I think: you will see that the whole Tory party will then discover that they disapproved of it from the first, but that they were too patriotic to say so; but should the mission of General Gordon succeed in effecting a peaceful evacuation of the Soudan, and warding off the flood of war from Egypt, then, I think, it is not unlikely that the Tory party will say: 'Oh, we always approved of this mission. We saw that it was a grand stroke of policy, but we were too modest to claim any share of the credit.' Gentlemen, I cannot enter further upon the future of Egypt at a moment when Lord Wolsley,—who knows the views of the Government, and better than any other man is qualified to give effect to them—goes to undertake the care of the measures that are in progress with respect to the Soudan; and when Lord Northbrook carries his experienced and impartial eye, well versed as he is in Eastern affairs, to consider what, after the financial breakdown that has occurred, is the course that we ought to pursue in regard to Egypt in general.

MR. GIBSON'S CRITICISMS ON THE EGYPTIAN QUESTION.

But I have a word to say in regard to our friends of the Tory party. There is a personage in Parliament who may be known to you by name—Mr. Gibson, an Irish Tory member, a gentleman of very considerable ability, and who always speaks upon Irish questions in such a manner that, whether you agree with him or not, you are sure to hear the case stated in the best way. But it is a rather odd circumstance that this gentleman never addresses a public meeting in his own country. Ireland has exported him as a political agitator, and he turns up every week or every month at some town in England, or marvellous to say, sometimes at a point in Scotland. Now, I do think it is a ludicrous state of things when it has become necessary that an agitator should be exported from Ireland in the shape of an Irish Tory, to instruct the people of Scotland how to demean themselves in the conduct of public affairs. However, Mr. Gibson has been active, and what he

says is this—that is the reason I have quoted him—he says that our policy in Egypt has been so bad that the whole country is against us. Upon that question I will only tell you this. The task we have had to perform in Egypt has been a well-nigh impossible task. We have been compelled constantly to take decisions without that full and adequate knowledge which alone can form a satisfactory basis for political action. We have not known as much as we desired to know of all Egyptian affairs; while the public, out-of-doors, naturally have known still less; and our opponents, who profess to know everything, have known nothing at all. However, I take this saying of Mr. Gibson that there can be no doubt whatever that the sense of Parliament and the country is against us on the Egyptian question, and that he will not allow us to shirk the judgment of Parliament upon that question and upon our foreign policy.

AN OFFER OF CONCILIATION TO THE TORIES.

Well, this opens to me a door of reconciliation and of adjustment that I think will be perfectly satisfactory. Let the House of Lords pass the Franchise Bill, and I will pledge myself by an engagement which I take here, and which, be it observed, is not confidential, that, directly after the House of Lords has passed the Franchise Bill, the fullest opportunity which the Government can give shall be given to the House of Commons to pass judgment on the Egyptian policy. If, as Mr. Gibson says—and it is not for me to contradict so great an authority—Parliament is opposed to us, and disapproves of our policy, well then, by a process perfectly well understood, we shall disappear from the scene; the Tories will come in and will rectify the Egyptian policy, and will settle the question of redistribution just as they please. Now, I think it must be admitted that this is a fair offer, and as far as I am concerned it will be perfectly satisfactory to me that it should be accepted.

OBSTRUCTION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

There is one other subject upon which I ought to say some words to you. That is the great question of obstruction in Parliament. Now, obstruction originated in the conduct of the Irish members; but the Irish members have some title to consideration and respect, because they obstruct for what they think to be national and patriotic purposes. I do not excuse them, and I feel the annoyance of the course they have pursued; but it is only fair to allow that. We have now, however, come into a situation that absolutely

demand your attention. It is not mere obstruction. Some causes of the present embarrassment are causes of legitimate operation. There is an enormous increase in the business of the Empire, and the whole of that increase flows into the House of Commons. We have got two Legislative Chambers; but I am sorry to say we do not find it practicable to devote any portion, any serious portion, of that enormous mass of business upon the hereditary branch of the Legislature. Nor is that their fault; it is the necessary state of things. The representative assembly must attract the business of the country. As our system of representation becomes more thoroughly popular, constituencies expect more from their members in the way of speaking, and there is a great addition—which I cannot complain of—in the bulk and number of speeches made on that account. But that is not all. This may be called a legitimate cause. But there is a very illegitimate cause; and that is, that the deference, I may say the reverence, with which fifty years ago every man entered that great assembly—the noblest deliberative assembly in the world—and the preparation of his mind to defer to the wish of that assembly as to the mode, time, and degree of his laying his opinions before it—these have undergone a woeful change. And I am bound to add this, that of that change a very small proportion is to be seen upon the Liberal benches. The great bulk of it—by far the greatest portion of it—is found among those to whom we had the best right to look to maintain every sound ancient tradition and the authority of the House of Commons over its own unruly members.

Now will you follow me in those few figures?—they will not take long. There are 1300 hours available in the session of Parliament for the transaction of public business. That is not an inconsiderable allowance. It means over 160 sittings of eight hours apiece and if any gentleman has gone through that process, he will know it is no trifling matter. There are 650 members; twice 650 are 1300. Therefore, you see that two hours is the average time which every member, if the time were equally divided, would, in a certain sense, be entitled to speak. Now, there are two Tories—I am speaking from an article which has just been published in a monthly review, and I rather think that the statement is perfectly accurate—there are two Tories whom I may almost call babies in long clothes—that is to say, they never sat in any Parliament before, and in this session of Parliament their infantile efforts have been developed between the two in 519 speeches. You will ask me how long the speeches have been. That I have not ascertained by a precise measurement; but I think to allow five minutes on an average, taking long and short together, is not unfair. In that way these two young members—Parliamentary novices and youngsters—have required forty-three hours of the public time. As these are young members, it is only fair to say, that the average of the

other members have a right to quite as much time as they have. That is not an unfair claim to make on the part of the other members. Supposing, then, that the other members, upon the average—I don't mean to say equally,—some, I am sorry to say, are great offenders, and among them none more than the humble individual addressing you, but perhaps with some excuse,—supposing all the other members upon the average were to claim to be heard on the same scale as these two Parliamentary youngsters, I tell you what the consequence would be—the session would require to be one of 13,975 hours, or one year seven months and seven days, sitting twenty-four hours every day, and Sundays included.

Now, gentlemen, I have told you the truth, that it is the Tory members who are the main and principal offenders in this matter. And what is worse than their being the main and principal offenders in taking time is this—that, when we have endeavoured to propose plans for amending the rules of the House of Commons, and by really very mild measures—too mild for the case—to bring about some improvement, these measures of ours have been met with a determined and persistent opposition. In the autumn of 1882, when we made our proposals—I do not recollect the exact number, but I rather think we had to spend in the discussion of these very mild proposals some thirty-four sittings of the House.

OBSTRUCTIVES IN THE COMMONS.

The result of all this is that the minority is master of the House—not for every purpose—not that the minority can do anything or effect any substantive result—but that, whenever the Government has in hand complex legislation, it is in the power of the minority to obstruct and defeat it. But the constitution of this country requires that the majority should prevail; and a direct blow is struck at the vital essence of your Constitution by a state of things in the House of Commons, in which the majority becomes impotent to give effect to its reasonable will, and when sheer obstacle and obstruction are sure in every complicated matter to win the day. This terrible evil that I have described will have to be cured by very great changes in the rules of procedure. I do not believe in those changes which are compulsory, but I believe that very large changes in the organization of the House must be made if you wish your business to be done. Let me recall to your mind that the very subject which occupies at the present moment the highest place in all our minds—namely, the subject of the Franchise Bill—is the subject which, perhaps, best illustrates our difficulty in regard to obstruction. We introduced a Bill, which contained, I think I may say, but three propositions—one extending the franchise, which the Tories say they are quite willing to do; one

providing what is called the Service Franchise, and that, as you know, is a proposal strongly favourable to their views; and one extinguishing, or dealing a very heavy and, I hope, deadly blow to faggit-voting. On that Bill with these propositions, important, but short, simple, and detached from all inconvenient detail, they compelled us to spend five-and-twenty nights. It is impossible your business can be done if such licence is to prevail, and I tell you fairly that there is no political question, be it what it may, which is more important to your interests than a thorough and radical change in the procedure of the House of Commons.

A REFORM OF PROCEDURE.

You have heard much of late about organic reform in the House of Lords. That question I do not propose to discuss; but this I will say—that there is no organic reform that the wit of man could devise in the House of Lords which would do half as much for the progress of liberty, for the maintenance of the credit of Parliament, and for the general welfare of the country, viewed even from the ultra-Liberal point of view—there is no such reform that would be nearly so important as a sound, judicious, and sufficient change in the rules of the House of Commons so as to enable it to do its business. It is, gentlemen, the unbinding of the arms of the House; it is strengthening its feeble knees, and giving nimbleness and movement to its feet. It is a fundamental and essential change, not in its composition, not in its disposition, but in its capacity to perform your work; and there is nothing I have more at heart than to bring home this conviction to the mind and the intelligence of every one whom I address.

AN APPEAL TO THE LORDS.

Now, gentlemen, I have spoken of an organic reform of the House of Lords. I am not going into the question of the Franchise beyond saying two or three sentences in conclusion, and endeavouring, with mildness, and with really a goodwill, to beseech and entreat that body to consider the course which has been attempted and which it has been invited to pursue. One of its great misfortunes is this—it is led at this moment by a man of brilliant powers, Lord Salisbury, a man of whom justice and conviction lead me to say that I believe he serves what he thinks to be the interests of his country, and is certainly not guided by motives of personal ambition. But his opinions are of a much higher Tory colour than the average opinion of the Chamber which he leads. This has been a serious misfortune to that Chamber on several occasions. The Irish Land Act was one of them. The House of Lords checked him, and took a mild

and moderate course when he recommended an extreme one. We must hope it will do the same again. Why should not the House of Lords be content with the great power it exercises, and that it exercises without serious complaint, of hampering the action of the Liberal Government and of curtailing its measures? Why will it insist on going into a direct conflict with the House of Commons and the country? In 1860 it did so on the Paper Bill, and the consequence was that in 1861 the House of Commons adopted a measure of self-defence, which has entirely excluded the House of Lords from all consideration of British finance. In 1831, under the influence of a star yet more malignant, the House of Lords endeavoured to stop the Reform Bill of that day. What happened? Riots and conflagrations in the country,—the Bill again presented in the course of a few months, and a surrender which cannot be termed less than ignominious. A second time, not directly as in the first instance, but indirectly,—which is the fashion now preferred—they gave a vote which did not throw out the Bill, but which the Government of Lord Grey rightly treated as destructive of the Bill. What was the consequence? The consequence was, that the House of Lords had to submit under pain, under fear of the creation of a vast number of peers for the purpose of converting a minority into a majority, and to pass the Bill which it detested. Are not these sufficient warnings? How many warnings are necessary before the voice of prudence can be heard? There was a saying of the old Bourbon family, that it was well known of them that they learned nothing and forgot nothing. But there is a predicament one degree more pitiable than that; and it is to learn nothing and forget everything. Let us hope, gentlemen, that without compulsion, without fear, without strain upon the Constitution, the monitions of the past may suffice, and that that great assembly, calling back to life the glorious traditions of its remoter past, may take the course which will best tend to place it in close harmony with the convictions of the nation, and to prolong its own existence for an honourable share through ages yet to come, in the direction of the fortunes of this mighty Empire.

The right hon. gentleman resumed his seat amid enthusiastic cheering, having spoken for an hour and fifty minutes.

THIRD SPEECH.

WORKING MEN'S MEETING,

WAVERLEY MARKET, EDINBURGH,

2nd SEPTEMBER 1884.

MR. WALTER FAIRBAIRN, blacksmith, moved that Lord Reay take the chair, a proposal carried with acclamation.

LORD REAY, who was received with cheers, said—Gentlemen, it is a great honour, and it is a pleasant duty, to welcome, in the name of the working classes of Edinburgh, a great fellow-worker—to welcome the statesman whose chief aim has been to lighten the burden of the working classes, and to secure to them the fruits of their toil—to welcome the statesman who has raised the financial credit of England to a point unknown in the history of this or any other country—and financial credit is the thermometer of national strength—to welcome a statesman who has never taken a leap in the dark. And it is only people who take leaps in the dark who are curious. It is our opponents who are anxious to know what there is in this redistribution scheme; because people who take leaps in the dark want to know where they will be landed next. But we know why they want the simultaneous introduction of the franchise and redistribution, because we know that some of our children, when they ask for playthings, it is that the smash of those playthings may be greater after. And gentlemen, we are not curious, because we do not take leaps in the dark. We walk in the light, and we know where we are going. We are confident in the right hon. gentleman and the Government he leads, because we know what to expect. We know that he will give us extension of the franchise first, afterwards redistribution; and a redistribution which will increase the contingent of Scottish members—I need not say to you Scottish liberal members—because he will give to us a Scottish Secretary, who will administer the affairs of Scotland according to Scottish feelings, who will give to us a drawing closer of

the ties with the colonies, in which so many of our friends and our relatives dwell. But I shall not dwell on the list of things which the right hon. gentleman is prepared to give to us. I shall only say this, that we are prepared to support him when he will grapple with that legislative deadlock which is caused by obstruction, and that he will restore to the House of Commons its ancient efficiency, which has been lost for the time being. And, gentlemen, if you ask what prescription is required for the House of Lords, which occasionally has attacks of neuralgia, we know who will prescribe a tonic for its nervous system, and that is our friend on the platform—Lord Rosebery—who would have occupied this chair, but who does not want to give any encouragement to those who say that he is the ‘Patron of Midlothian,’ and because he knows too well that the Liberal electors of Midlothian have no other patron than their own principles. But if he declines to be called the patron of Midlothian, we will tell him that he is the Senator for Scotland, and that in the House of Lords he is the best representative of Scottish wants. Well, now, gentlemen, before I sit down, only let me ask this question. Our opponents say and arrogate to themselves that they are the defenders of the British Constitution. Now, they are defending it against an imaginary foe. Are we here to-night as a band of conspirators against the British Constitution? We are here to strengthen that Constitution. We are here to give to the House of Commons a firm basis in a wider representation of the people, and we will also, if it is necessary, strengthen the House of Lords so as to make it broader than it is now, the representative of the greatness and unity of this Empire. Gentlemen, we are not going to listen to an enemy of the British Constitution. We are going to listen to the best friend the British Constitution ever had. We are going to listen, and this is my last word, to the statesman whose illustrious career represents in the highest degree loyal service to our beloved Queen, high regard for the British Constitution, for its principles, nay, for its spirit, love of progress, without which this nation cannot hold its own among the nations of the world; that trust in his race, which is the result of his knowledge, that he is the marvellous representative of a race which has and combines the indomitable energy of youth with the mature wisdom of centuries.

Presentation of an Address.

MR. CORNELIUS YORSTON, secretary of the Arrangements Committee, was then proceeding to read the following address, but after a few sentences had been uttered, he was interrupted by cries of ‘Print it,’ and, yielding to the feeling of the meeting, he handed the address to

Mr. THOM, who, after folding it in a morocco case, placed it on the table before Mr. Gladstone :—

'To the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, M.P.

'Honoured Sir,—In the name of the working men of Edinburgh, Leith, and district, we desire to join with our fellow-citizens in again welcoming you to our ancient city.

'On a former occasion we expressed a wish that, in obedience to the desire of the people, you might see your way to again accept the foremost position in the Government of the nation. Since then the course of events afforded you a triumphant opportunity of responding to that desire; and we have now the honour and the pleasure of welcoming you, not only as the distinguished member for Midlothian, the trusted leader of the Liberal party, but as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

'In that capacity we have to congratulate you on the measure of success which has attended the sincere efforts of your Government to promote the happiness and prosperity of the people, notwithstanding the meshes of debt and difficulty which were bequeathed by the party who immediately preceded you in power. Especially do we congratulate you on the generous legislation you have been enabled to carry through for the benefit of Ireland, and for the determination recently avowed that in all questions affecting the rights and liberties of the three kingdoms, the principles of justice and equality should invariably prevail.

'Sir, we cannot forget that you are face to face with a great political crisis, in which the misguided power of an ancient but irresponsible section of the Constitution would prevent you from conferring the rights of citizenship on two millions of our fellow-countrymen. Need we assure you that in this struggle our declared and attested sympathies are decidedly with you, and that along with other sections of the community, we are prepared to insist that any Chamber, however ancient, or any power, however potent, which deliberately sets itself against the will of the nation, has mistaken its function, for the people must prevail.

'The delay of this and other important measures, which has been brought about mainly by the mistaken tactics of unscrupulous men, there is cause for regret; but we have confidence in the sincerity of your Government seeking to give early and satisfactory effect to the requirements of the country, and that the Scottish nation will not look in vain for a measure promising to give a real and liberal extension of local and representative control over the administration of Scottish affairs.

'We deeply regret the troubles in Egypt are not yet approaching the happy solution which all would desire, but we have hope that, by the pursuance of a just policy founded upon a due respect for the

liberties of the people, a more prosperous condition may yet be in store for our heavily-burdened brethren in the East.

'In conclusion, we earnestly hope that you may in every way be invigorated by your brief sojourn in the north; and when you return to renew your long and arduous labours for the good of your country, we wish you God-speed in every sphere of toil, and seek to assure you that in the permanent gratitude of your countrymen you will ever reap a legitimate reward.'

SPEECH BY MR. GLADSTONE.

Mr. GLADSTONE, on rising to address the meeting, was received with cheers again and again renewed. When silence had been restored, he said—My Lord Reay and Gentlemen,—In the crisis at which we have arrived, what we, the Ministers of the Crown, desire is to hear the voice of the nation. I thank you for enabling me to meet this vast assemblage, which, vast as it is, I chiefly rejoice in because its gathering together is perfectly spontaneous. It is not under the command of any organization. It is not collected by the use of the long purse of a wealthy party. It has not been assembled by providing gratuitous tickets by railway for the purpose of bringing together the population of many counties, or at least that portion of the population which can be induced to come. These are not the means, gentlemen, by which you have been brought together. It has been by your own personal and conscientious impulse, and the request made to me to receive your address has been prompted from yourselves. I felt, gentlemen, that it was impossible, although you had offered that I should receive your address in silence for me to waive the opportunity of returning to you my grateful thanks for so remarkable and extraordinary a manifestation. Gentlemen, you are deeply interested—not less deeply interested than myself—in the great question which is now before us, and to the speedy settlement of which I trust you will materially contribute. I could not undertake—for physical strength would not suffice for it—to set forth before you, as I have endeavoured before other audiences less vast, the points of interest and importance that crowd upon the mind in connection with the present juncture.

The Nature of the Franchise Bill.

But one or two things I will say to you briefly, and endeavour to leave an impression on your minds. That we have approached the conflict in which we are engaged in a spirit, I trust, of fairness, but in a spirit of conciliation. We have made our Bill less perfect than we could have desired in order that it might be simple, that it might be intelligible, that it might afford no fair pretext to those who were disposed to encumber its progress, and to prevent its arrival at the goal by

raising an infinite number of questions that are connected with the representation of the people. Our Bill, gentlemen, is a Bill for the enfranchisement of two million men, and it is a Bill for little else; but we think that that brief description has made it worthy of your acceptance, and has secured for it a place that cannot be shaken in your hearts and in your consciences. Gentlemen, I have mentioned it as an act of conciliation on our part, one among many, that we have introduced together with the extension of the household franchise to the counties what is termed the service franchise. And I have said that inasmuch as the class concerned in the service franchise are, of all others, perhaps, in the closest relations with the property and capital and rank of the country, that is a sign of conciliation. But, gentlemen, I know well, and I know particularly in Scotland, that those who will be enfranchised by means of the enactment will give just and loyal and at the same time perfectly independent votes. Our efforts at conciliation, gentlemen, have met with no return. The only return that they have produced has been the adoption of indirect and evasive modes of opposition, and the proposal of a condition for passing the Franchise Bill, which condition we know, and which condition our opponents know to be perfectly impracticable.

The Tory Cry for a Dissolution.

Now, gentlemen, there is one point on which they have dwelt which I will briefly notice to you, because the declaration that they make has a sound of plausibility about it. They say, 'This Parliament is too old; it does not come fresh enough from the minds of the people. We wish it to go back to its constituents, and then we will attend to what it says.' Gentlemen, it is a truly edifying spectacle to hear from the highest Tories in the land an argument for short Parliaments. Now, gentlemen, there is a great deal to be said for short Parliaments, but this I will add, that if we are to have short Parliaments, we will have them by the law of the land, and not by the dictation of the majority in the House of Lords. The Parliament was not four years old when we introduced the Franchise Bill; and it is, indeed, a squeamish and scrupulous conscience which has led these Tories to doubt whether a Parliament four years old is to be trusted. But if they say it is too long a time since we were in contact with the people, I want to know how long it is since they were in contact with the people.

The Power to Dissolve Parliament.

Now, gentlemen, your chairman has said that there is a cry about the Constitution, that the Constitution is in danger. Well, I am not sure, but there is a state of facts, in which, if our opponents were

strong enough for the purpose, the Constitution would be in some danger. For, gentlemen, what is our Constitution with respect to this great subject of the dissolution of Parliament? You know it as well as I do. The Parliament must, by law, terminate within a certain number of years; but besides that, there is a power given to the Crown, acting upon the advice of the Executive Government, to dissolve the Parliament if occasion arise. A dissolution, gentlemen, means a great deal. It means a heavy burden on the country. It means a great loss of Parliamentary time, an interruption of legislation, a great amount of charge, and a great amount of labour to be undertaken both by candidates and by constituencies. It is no trifle that there should exist a power of imposing this burden upon the people—a burden necessary to enable them to exercise their choice. Well, gentlemen, how has the Constitution regulated this matter? It has regulated it by placing the power of dissolution in the hands of those who, if they wrongly advise the Crown to dissolve Parliament, will be punished for that advice by the people, and when the new Parliament is elected, will be sent about their business. Gentlemen, there is something rational in a system like that. A vast power, and even, possibly, a dangerous power, is committed to Ministers, and when they exercise it they know that they will be called to a strict and immediate account. But what is the doctrine now set up? The doctrine now set up is this, that besides the discretion of the Government to advise the Crown, and besides the power of the Crown to dissolve Parliament, the House of Lords shall be entitled to bring legislation to a deadlock. And then to proclaim that, in order to induce them to move, the Parliament must be dissolved. Well, gentlemen, that is at first sight to say that the House of Lords shall have the power of doing that which, as you know, the Ministers of the Crown can do, namely, advise a dissolution, and with the consent of the Crown have a dissolution. But what is the cost to the House of Lords? The Ministers of the Crown, if they wrongly advise a dissolution, are punished by dismissal. If the House of Lords wrongly advise a dissolution, is it to be punished by dissolution? No. The proposal is that the House of Lords shall have the power of virtually advising and compelling a dissolution, and that if they were wrong they shall remain exactly as they were before, to play the same prank over again, and as often as they think fit. Well, gentlemen, that is the Constitution of this country.

The Franchise a Good in itself apart from Redistribution.

I have only a few words more to say. It is said, gentlemen, that we ought to join redistribution with the franchise. Now, I wish to join issue very plainly with our opponents on that matter. What they mean is this, that conferring the franchise is not conferring a public advantage, but it is bringing into existence an inconvenient power which can only be rendered tolerable by distributing, cutting,

and carving it in a certain way. Gentlemen, in opposition to that doctrine, I wish to proclaim on my own part, and on the part of my colleagues, that in our view the franchise is a good conferred upon the people, with distribution or without it. No doubt it is a greater good if we can follow it up with redistribution—and make a more just and equable division of political power. But we insist upon this, that the franchise in itself, that the introduction of two million of intelligent fellow-subjects to the exercise of political power, is a great good conferred upon the nation. And when our opponents call out for redistribution, what they really mean is this—that in their view the franchise is not a good, but is in the nature of an evil and of an inconvenience, which can only be rendered tolerable and rendered manageable by joining it with particular methods of arrangement. To repeat a simile which I once ventured to use about it,—and I think it is a true one,—they seem to proceed as if it was a question of the arrival of a great lot of wild beasts at a place: where they are to be exhibited; and the people who are to take charge of them, when the caravans containing them arrive, very naturally say that they will not be safe with these wild beasts until they are all and each of them lodged in their separate cages. Therefore, gentlemen, when these two million voters arrive, as they are now knocking at the door, the Tories refuse to let them in until they have got all the cages ready, in which they consider that this large number of voters may be safely deposited.

The Voice of the Nation will prevail.

Gentlemen, you see how wide is the difference between our opponents and ourselves; but let me tell you that the decision of this question does not rest with us. It rests with the nation. It is the voice of the nation that will prevail. We the Ministers of the Crown have scrupled to assume a great activity in stirring up the people, because we consider that the expression of opinion which we desire and invite ought to be their act, and not ours. Consequently, though I have come here to address my friends and constituents in Midlothian, neither I nor the Ministers in general have gone scampering about the country, first to this place and then to that, in order to make a sort of show of opposition to the House of Lords in this important matter. No, gentlemen, we look to you for your support, for a full, free, natural expression of opinion and conviction. We invite it with a good conscience, and we expect it with a sanguine expectation; because never were you engaged in a more honourable, never in a more politic, never in a more constitutional undertaking than when now you are about the business of endeavouring to procure that large extension of the Parliamentary constituency, which will give to the illustrious throne of Her Majesty a yet broader basis, and to the laws and Constitution of the country a yet firmer founda-

tion to meet the vicissitudes of ages to come, with a more and more complete and affectionate tribute rendered to them from the heart and from the intelligence of the people. Gentlemen, I thank you for your admirable address, and for the patience with which this vast assembly has been pleased to listen to me.

Confidence in the Government.

Mr. NEIL McLEAN, secretary of the Trades' Council, moved—'That this vast meeting desires to express its high appreciation of Mr. Gladstone's kindness in so cordially agreeing to meet with the working men on the occasion of this visit to Midlothian, to award him a hearty vote of thanks for the eloquent and high-toned address which he has just delivered, to renew our expression of confidence in the policy of Her Majesty's Government, and specially in their determination to insist upon the passing of the Franchise Bill.'

Mr. GEORGE MACKAY, a member of the Trades' Council, amid loud cries for Lord Rosebery, remarked that they as Scotchmen were proud of Mr. Gladstone, and seconded the resolution, which, on being put to the meeting, was carried amid cheers.

After a few words from LORD ROSEBERY, Mr. BROADHURST, M.P., and Mr. FERGUSON of Nova Scotia, M.P.—

The CHAIRMAN, in bringing the meeting to a close, said he had to thank them for having made his task so extremely easy on that occasion. He thanked them, in the first place, for the reception they had given to the Prime Minister, to his (Lord Reay's) friend in the House of Lords, and to his friend the youngest recruit of the Liberal party in the House of Commons. Meetings like the one of that night made the task of legislators a pleasant one—they impressed upon them a deeper sense of the responsibility of their duties, if that were necessary. For himself and his friends, he need not tell them that Lord Rosebery had not said a word too much, and they were prepared to march in the front or in the rear, exactly where they (the people) wished to place them. But one thing they were not prepared for was not to march with them; but they asked the people to march with them to new victories under this hero of past victories, and, as they all hoped, the hero of future victories—the Prime Minister. Lord Reay concluded by asking the vast audience to remain in their places until the departure of the Prime Minister and party.

The meeting thereafter broke up.

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